A Missionary's Notebook

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"Oh, no, Father, you must first give me the Sacrament of Baptism."—*Page 10.*

A MISSIONARY'S NOTEBOOK

BY

REV. RICHARD W. ALEXANDER

Mercedes, sister

ILLUSTRATED

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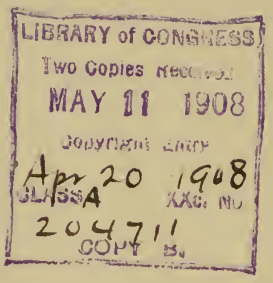

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Preface

NARRATIVES of human interest are always extremely attractive, especially when they touch the deeper chords of the heart. We love to read of the inner life of others and contrast experiences. This is one of the reasons that have made the life stories of Rev. Richard W. Alexander so very popular. In his missionary experiences he has come in contact with a host of souls, and his "Notebook" must be rich in these treasured tales of the lives of others.

There is, however, another reason for the wonderful vogue these stories have attained; and this reason is their relationship to the non-Catholic mission work. They constitute the first literary fruits of a religious movement that has spread throughout the country and has awakened the interest of the most sincere and devout Catholic souls. Every great movement that has left its impress on its day and generation has produced a literature of its own. The mission movement for non-Catholics is not without this evidence of its intellectual and religious depth.

During the past fifteen years this movement, as it now centres about the Apostolic Mission House in Washington, has turned the attention of the priesthood in a more positive way to the great work of convert-making, and has awakened a popular interest in the soul stories of the thousands who have sought within the haven of the Church a refuge from the storms of religious discussions and the darkness of doubts and

uncertainties that prevail in the outer religious world. This wave of enthusiasm for converts and convert-making has created the demand for such stories as Rev. Richard W. Alexander has published month by month in *The Missionary*. As they were published they were copied extensively in the religious press, and some of them have been selected for the pages of the graded readers for the children of the schools. They have been read with the keenest interest in the class room and have found their way into the refectories of not a few convents of religious, where they have been read aloud for the edification of all, and in some instances they have been taken into the pulpit and given to the people instead of the Sunday sermon.

All this has created an irresistible demand for their republication in book form. What, too, has added to their charm is the wonderful skill of the story-teller. He has a rich vein of precious ore to mine, but his strong fingers have known how to work the precious metal into most exquisite settings. Many of these stories are so touching, as well as so true, that they have stirred the heart to its depths. I have heard some of them read in a group of not oversensitive souls, and there was not a dry eye at the finish.

Abundant evidences such as these of their supreme merit will give them a larger and more appreciative public as they appear in book form.

Rev. A. P. Doyle, C. S. P.,
Apostolic Mission House,
Brookland, Washington, D. C.

April, 1908.

Introduction

THE WRITER of these missionary notes tells in some of them certain personal experiences of his own; the others he has learned from missionaries of his acquaintance, the personal form of the narrative being preserved for the sake of a more vivid presentation of the scenes and incidents—and all are vouched for as true.

They are gathered together to be of service in the pulpit, in the Sunday school, in academy and parish libraries, as parochial premiums or as interesting and edifying reading in the home circle, for old and young.

They illustrate God's infinite love for souls, also the fact that in every walk of life there are opportunities of being an apostle.

THE AUTHOR.

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The Dying Actress

"TALKING about apostolates," said a Massachusetts priest to me some time ago, "let me tell you of an experience of mine. I was called out one night at 10 o'clock by one of our hotels to the bedside of an actress. They said she was unconscious and dying, and that she might be a Catholic, for she had a rosary on her dressing table. I went hastily with the holy oils. I found a girl of about twenty-two, lying pale and helpless on her bed. Her eyes were closed, and her long, dark hair, disordered on the pillow, framed a singularly sweet, innocent face. One of the hotel maids was busied about her, and it was not hard to know what faith shone in her honest, charitable eyes. Stepping reverently aside, she said in a hushed voice to some of the troupe that were in the small room:

" 'It's the priest.'

"Every one made way, and I stooped over the girl. She opened her eyes and tried to smile.

" 'Are you a priest?' she asked.

" 'Yes, my child,' I answered.

" 'Am I very ill? I am in awful pain, but maybe I'll get better.' Then she suddenly fainted.

"The maid I spoke of gave her restoratives, and I hurriedly asked what was the matter.

" 'Why, Burtie was performing her great trapeze act to-day and missed her count, Father; she fell thirty

feet. The surgeon says her spine is injured and there is no hope. He gave her twelve hours to live, perhaps not that. It is her grit that keeps her up, Father,' said the young woman, with tears in her eyes.

"'She is the best performer in the company,' said another young woman.

"'A variety actress?'

"'Yes, Father. We have refined vaudeville. But we are a very select organization,' said the woman, with emphasis. 'Burtie is very correct. Not a breath of gossip ever touched her! She kept us all straight. Poor Burtie!'

"Just then Burtie's eyes opened.

"'The priest,' she said faintly.

"I made a sign to them. 'You had better all leave, and I will call you in a few minutes.'

"'Yes, Father,' they said obediently, and I was alone with the dying girl.

"'Father, I want to make a general confession,' said she, and she began with difficulty a clear, honest, sincere confession. It took her some time, but she would not let me hurry her. I said a few words and gave her as penance one 'Hail Mary.' She began to say it aloud slowly. 'My child,' I said, 'make a fervent act of contrition first. I am going to give you absolution.'

"'Oh, no, Father,' she said; 'you must first give me the Sacrament of Baptism.'

"'Baptism!' I said, amazed. 'Surely you are baptized!'

" 'No, Father. I am not a Catholic. I was never baptized. In belief I am and always have been a Catholic, but I never received any sacrament. I go to Mass every Sunday I can and say my rosary. I learned that at school. But our life has been so roving that I could only do that much. I never had much chance, you see. I was wild and self-willed, and when grandma died I left school; and as there was no one to restrain me, being alone in the world, I drifted from dancing school to riding wild horses and doing burlesque. But I never forgot all I learned at the convent, although I did not think about it for a long time.'

" 'Where did you go to school, my child?'

" 'To boarding school—to St. X. Academy, Pennsylvania.'

"I knew the convent well. I paused, amazed at her story, told with difficulty, for her sufferings were evident.

" 'Won't you baptize me, Father, and then give me absolution? Baptism is enough, I know, but I want absolution, too.'

"She folded her hands and looked steadily at me with dark, soft eyes, in which I saw death.

" 'Indeed I will, child,' and I took out my stole and, seizing a goblet of water from her table, I exhorted her to perfect contrition, and fervently baptized her.

" 'Thank God!' she whispered, and closed her eyes.

"It seemed to me, after a few moments' pause, that the ghastly hue of death had given place to a more life-like color. I waited.

"'Father,' she said, 'I'm suffering terribly, and I know now that I will die soon. I want you to give me Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction.'

"I hesitated. I was amazed. Here was a dying actress, just baptized! How did I know whether she was sufficiently instructed? She read my thoughts.

"'You don't think I am instructed, Father? I believe firmly that the Blessed Eucharist is our Lord Himself, His true Body and Blood, which I am to receive without fasting because He is my Viaticum; and Extreme Unction is the last anointing of the purified Catholic before she goes to meet her Judge! Father, I remember it all. I used to listen to Sister Veronica telling the class. Her instructions could never be forgotten! Father, won't you give me the last sacraments?'

"Here was an apostolate fulfilled! That good Sister, whoever she was, had saved this soul! 'Wait ten minutes, dear child. I will bring our Lord to you.' And I went hastily to the door and summoned those outside. To the Catholic maid, who was nearest me, I said, 'I am going to the church for the Blessed Sacrament; I will be back inside of fifteen minutes,' and I hurried out.

"In less than fifteen minutes I was back at Burtie's bedside. She was breathing quietly, and unclosed her eyes when I came in. I whispered my instructions to the maid. A little table with lighted candles, holy water, etc., was quickly prepared, and I laid the pyx upon it. As I lifted the Sacred Host the girl's eyes

were fixed upon it, and I heard her say, 'My Lord and my God!' I could hardly keep back a tear. I administered her first and last Communion. Extreme Unction followed. She held out her hands for the holy oil, and when I read the final prayers and gave her the last absolution a little sigh of content broke from her lips.

"'Thank God,' she said again, but it was in a whisper.

"There was silence in the room. It was full of hotel people and the young women of the company, but all were deeply impressed and very reverent.

"The doctor came, made a short examination. 'Any hope?' I whispered.

"'She may last an hour,' and he left the room. I sat down by the bed, for this little convert had gone to my heart. She lay very still, fingering her rosary. She opened her soft, dark eyes and her lips formed some words. I bent over her, and she said, with difficulty of breath, but very distinctly:

"'Father—write to St. X.—won't you? Tell Sister Veronica—I died—a good Catholic; that I made my—first Communion—on my death-bed—she used to talk—so much about—the happy day of first Communion! I know now. She used to say, "My Lord and my God." It was engraved on her silver ring—yes. "My Lord and my God!"'

"I promised. These were her last words. She seemed to sleep, and then awoke with wide, distressed eyes. I began the prayers for the dying and gave her

the Plenary Indulgence. The lines of pain wore away, and at the end her face was radiant. When all was over a marvelous expression of peace and content was there, and the weeping women who crowded round the pillow of death sobbed out, 'Oh, how beautiful she is!' I made the sign of the cross over the lifeless remains and left.

"When I got home I sat for a long time in my study, thinking over the whole occurrence; and I am not ashamed to say I dashed away some tears. Before I sought my bed I wrote a letter to 'Sister Veronica, St. X. Academy, Pennsylvania,' and told her all I had witnessed. Several days passed by. The company carried away the remains of poor Burtie to her home city. I heard no more about the episode. I had forgotten to inquire the correct name of the poor child for registry, and felt I had been rather negligent in an important matter; but at the end of the week a letter came from the superior of the academy. It read as follows:

"'DEAR REV. FATHER: Your letter was received and made a profound impression on the Sisters. We all remembered poor Burtie Carr. She was a bright, spirited girl and everybody liked her. Knowing she was never baptized and would have few opportunities for instruction after she left us, her teacher did all in her power in her class instructions to explain Catholic doctrine. She told me she often said a silent prayer, and looking at Burtie would try to fix her attention, as she was the only non-Catholic in the room. This

dear Sister has now passed to her heavenly home, young in years, but full of grace and merit. Her name was Sister Veronica Ewing, daughter of the late General Hugh Ewing, soldier and author. She was of a distinguished American family, niece of General Sherman and cousin of Father Thomas Sherman, S. J. She is sleeping in our little cemetery, and we can readily believe her soul has met the ransomed soul of her pupil, converted through her words and prayers after many years. I thank you for writing this account, dear Rev. Father, and recommending myself to your prayers, I remain with respect, yours in Christ,

"'SISTER STANISLAUS, Superior.'

"I folded the letter and thought 'What a history, and how many more are unwritten!' Then I said aloud: 'Oh, ye good Sisters, who give out the milk and honey of the faith to young souls who cluster round your school desks, have ye not an apostolate in your cloisters?'"

The Apostle of His Family

Percy Brown, without a doubt, is in heaven with the angels and saints. Indeed, his short career was so unusual that he deserves a place among God's chosen apostles.

When a little fellow of five years he was a frequent visitor at a neighbor's house next door to his own Protestant home. And for this reason: In one of the rooms of this good Catholic family there hung a large and beautiful picture of the crucifixion of our Lord. It was something new and strange to Percy, and the very first time he saw it he demanded an explanation, which was given with due deference to the supposed infantile intelligence of the inquirer. He was awed and impressed and constantly spoke about it at home. He was not understood, of course, and no attention was paid to his prattling. His visits to the picture continued, however, and the good mother of the Catholic home instinctively felt that there was something unusual about Percy. His two brothers took him to the public school when he was a little over six years old. But he was not satisfied there, and left after a few days, and, without the knowledge of his parents, went to the parochial school with a little Catholic friend of his own age. His brothers mentioned the matter at home, but when Percy seemed

so happy his parents said it "made no difference" and permitted him to continue.

The next year, during the Ember Days of September, the younger children of St. Mary's School were prepared for first Confession. Percy, who had learned his Catechism and the method of confessing, marched to the church with the rest and took his place near the box.

A lady who was making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the church had her attention attracted to the children and was surprised to see the little "Protestant boy," who had never been baptized, seated with the Catholic children before the "box." She knew Percy's family well, and was quite a friend to the little boy; in fact, the picture of the Crucifixion to which we have referred was in her house. She immediately spoke to the Sister in charge of the class.

"Sister, isn't that Percy Brown?"

"Yes; Percy is going to make his first Confession. He is well prepared."

"But, Sister, don't you know every one belonging to him is Protestant? Why, the child has never been baptized in any church."

"What!" exclaimed the Sister, turning pale, "Percy not a Catholic—not baptized, you say?"

"He is not a Catholic and has never been baptized," repeated the lady. "I know the family well. I live next door."

The Sister lost no time in going over to Percy and telling him that he could not go to Confession—that

she did not know he was not a Catholic. The effect upon Percy was startling.

"Oh! Sister," he sobbed, "I *am* a Catholic. I do want to go and tell my sins. I ain't a Protestant."

His grief was heart-breaking.

The children all stood up and looked at the little fellow, thinking he was reproved for some misdemeanor; and the priest, hearing the noise, came out of the confessional and asked what was the matter. The Sister told him. Looking at the tear-stained little face and the swimming blue eyes, the priest smiled and said:

"Why, my boy, what is the reason you want to go to Confession?"

"To tell my sins," said the little six-year-old between his sobs.

"But your sins cannot be forgiven by absolution. You have never been baptized."

"Well, then, baptize me, Father, and let me go to Confession," pleaded the little fellow.

The priest hesitated. The little face was thoughtful, even though drenched with tears.

"Well, you may come into the confessional. But you must stop crying and not distract your companions." And the priest returned to the box.

Percy was quiet at once, and when his turn came he went into the confessional. When he came out he went straight to the altar railing and knelt there in prayer. As he left the church he said to the Sister:

"I'm going to bring my mother to Father ———

to-morrow. I am going to be baptized a Catholic."

The Sister was rather surprised at the emphasis of the little fellow, and said warningly:

"Don't make your mother angry, Percy. You ought to wait until you are a little older."

"But suppose I should die!" said the small philosopher. "You told us yourself, Sister, we would never see God without being baptized."

The Sister acknowledged the fact, but, not wishing to cause trouble in a Protestant household, told Percy to say a fervent prayer before he asked his mother.

What Percy told his mother we do not know, but the very next afternoon she came to the rectory with Percy.

She explained that the boy gave her no peace, insisted on being baptized, and was so serious and earnest that she and his father saw no great harm in gratifying him. And she asked the priest to baptize him. Percy was radiant with joy. The good pastor baptized him and the mother watched the ceremonial with a few others who were present.

Percy received the name of "Joseph," and was so delighted that he would answer to nothing else, except from his father, who always called him Percy.

He bought a small crucifix and wore it around his neck, and continued his attendance at St. Mary's School. He was obedient and attentive and possessed the usual amount of boyish liveliness. After a year or two he began to tease his mother about his two brothers. He told her that they would never go to

heaven if they were not baptized, and he continually spoke of the beautiful instructions and the many interesting things that happened at the parish school. In the end he persuaded her to send the other two boys to St. Mary's with him.

The Sisters were surprised and delighted one morning to see little Percy, now nine years old, march in proudly with his two elder brothers (not much older, to be sure), and have them placed on the school roll. This young apostle never ceased until he obtained their consent and that of their parents to their baptism, and both boys received the sacred waters of regeneration. They appreciated the grace that was given to them through their little brother, and they loved him with an extraordinary tenderness in which all at home shared. In due time all three were confirmed and made their first Holy Communion.

Percy now became an altar boy, and his piety and diligence were remarkable. He had an altar erected in his little bed room at home, where he hung his precious crucifix and all the medals and sacred pictures he received at school. One day his father, annoyed at some childish misdemeanor, commanded him to take "that Popish trumpery" down. "If you don't," said the angry man, "I will throw the whole business into the fire and take you from that Papist school."

Percy stood still, as if he were rooted to the spot. Then the large tears gathered in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks and his frame shook with emotion. He fell on his knees.

"Papa! Papa!" he cried, "you will break your little boy's heart. Oh! papa, you don't know how good they make me."

The father's heart was touched to see his darling boy, his favorite son, in such anguish. He lifted him up and told him he might keep his pictures and stuff. But as Percy nestled to his father's breast his heaving bosom and convulsive sobs showed how his little heart was wounded.

After that his father never permitted him to be crossed in his piety or his "religious notions," as he called them. Percy was frail, and to his parents he seemed like an angel, too sweet and rare to belong to this earth—his face was so pure and spiritual, his sayings so unusual, so "old-fashioned" as they phrased it.

After Percy left school he went to learn a trade, and sometimes had to make great efforts and even sacrifices to hear Mass on Sundays and receive the sacraments. On one occasion he was detained late on Saturday night and he cautioned his mother not to let him oversleep himself.

"You know, mother," he said, "Catholics commit a mortal sin if they stay away from Mass on Sunday."

His mother promised, but when she went to call him he looked so weary and slept so soundly she "had not the heart" to rouse the poor boy. When he awoke and found the lateness of the hour he rushed out of the house without his breakfast and ran from church to church, only to find even the last Mass almost over.

He returned home disconsolate. All week he was depressed and sad over this accident, and his mother assured him she would never disappoint him again. It was then that Percy asked her to go with him on Sundays, and to please him she consented and later accompanied him to Mass. One grace led to another, and before the end of the year she was baptized and made her profession of faith.

Percy's whole heart was now set on the conversion of his father. But this seemed an impossibility. Mr. Brown had not interfered or made objections when the rest of his family followed Percy, but no example or precept seemed to affect him. He was a good man, as far as honesty and morals go, but he had no use for special piety or religion. Percy grew more fervent, more prayerful. We know not the thoughts that filled his innocent heart, but we know that his health began to decline. He was not nineteen, yet it was evident he had not long to live. Work was perforce given up and the lad remained at home. Patient, gentle, uncomplaining, he prayed and read and became the object of the tenderest love and care.

One day he came on his father sitting on the back porch with his own little Catechism in his hands. The boy said nothing, but his heart gave a great bound of joy.

"Bring him to the faith, Lord, and take my poor life," he murmured.

It was not long before the propitious moment came. His father knew what was passing in the boy's mind

and had set to work to learn something of the religion which surrounded him with such peace and content. He felt that his cherished son was praying for him—nay, might be offering up his pure life for him. He resisted grace no longer. He spoke to a priest, was instructed and baptized and became a member of the Holy Catholic Church.

Percy's soul was filled to the brim with holy joy. He lay on his couch, white and wan, but overflowing with happiness. He felt he was dying, but oh! it was easy now to die, when those he loved—mother, father, two brothers—were bound close to him by a common faith and would be with him in the spirit world by the consoling doctrine of the communion of saints. And one day when they gathered round his bed and watched the death damp gather on his forehead he smiled an angel's smile on their bleeding hearts and fled away to receive the crown of an apostle.

Oh! can we doubt that his spirit still hovers over them and helps them to bear life's trials and its pains? Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works live after them.

A Good Seed Dropped While Traveling

It was a long journey, this trip from Chicago to Pittsburg, and although I was comfortably fixed in my Pullman, with Sunday newspapers and magazines, I would have preferred a berth and a night journey, when I could have slept all the way and wakened at my destination. The fates were against me, and I made a virtue of necessity. The train had started, and, after the first quarter of an hour, had got into the fixed, rapid swing of the limited, and I looked aimlessly out of the window at the flying landscape and began a train of thought. I wondered if it were any dispensation of Providence that caused me to travel thus in daytime instead of night, as I had desired. Recalling many instances in which I had known such things to be the case, I mentally offered myself to God and begged Him to permit me to be a willing instrument in His hands, whatever might happen, and a little hymn my children of the parish are accustomed to sing during Mass flitted through my mind:

"All for Thee, O Heart of Jesus,
All for Thee in life and death,
Till my latest dying breath."

I think I hummed the melody as I listened to the regular throbbing of the wheels over the track of the iron horse, and I felt in a particularly happy state of

mind. Sitting close to the window, I had fastened a silk handkerchief lightly around my neck, which entirely concealed my Roman collar. Looking up after a few minutes, I met the eyes of a gentleman of about thirty-five, who occupied the chair in front of mine. He bowed, and I returned the salutation.

"A long journey before us, sir," he said. "The first stop of the train is in Pittsburg, I believe."

"Oh, no," I answered; "there is a stop or two before that. But it is a long journey even to that point. Pittsburg is my destination."

"I am going straight on to New York, where I take the Etruria for Liverpool. I am a merchant, traveling in the interests of X——— & Co. I am a member of the firm. My wife and children await me in New York."

"I trust the journey and the voyage will be favorable. We hear of so many accidents of late."

"Thank you. I hope our party will have none." Then there was a pause. "Suppose we play a game of cards to pass the time."

"I am sorry to say no, but I never played a game of cards in my life."

He looked at me in surprise.

"Well, well, that is unusual. I am fond of a game. Suppose I show you some tricks at cards, simple tricks, of course, but amusing enough to while away the time."

"I shall be delighted," I said. "I enjoy these things

very much, although I am not conversant with them. In fact, I have never had the time."

He called the porter by a touch of the electric bell, and he soon had a portable table before us. Between the really amusing tricks and clever conversation an hour or two slipped by most pleasantly. Finally the table was removed and, turning our chairs together, we began to talk more confidentially.

"You are an observing man," he said to me, "a student and a thinker. I like to talk to you. I also have read a great deal. There is only one thing that puzzles me, so to speak; one thing I cannot swallow nor digest, and that is the doctrine of Roman Catholics."

"Do you know much about it?"

"Hardly a thing, except the traditions of my childhood, which have grown with my growth. Our childhood seldom plays us false."

"I don't agree with you in that, my friend. Anyhow, I am a Catholic—a Roman Catholic, as you say it."

He gave a start and looked squarely at me. I was smiling.

"You a Roman Catholic? I would never have thought so. I really beg your pardon."

"And why would you never have thought so?"

"Well, because an intelligent man like you does not seem to belong to that priest-ridden sect!"

"But I am also a priest."

He fairly stared at me. I was amused, for, with all

his assumption of extensive reading, he evidently had never been in such company before.

"I beg a thousand pardons! A priest! Who would have believed it? A priest! I am glad it isn't one of those deluded monks that figure so largely in the Dark Ages," he murmured.

"But I am also a monk; that is, a member of a religious order, traveling from one monastery to another on business."

He wheeled his chair around, then back again, his face betokening a profound amazement.

"A priest, a monk and—a gentleman!"

"I hope so," I said. "And now, my friend, without the slightest feeling of acrimony, let me tell you something. You have gone through life and have read, you say, a great deal. It may be so, but it is my turn to be amazed that a gentleman of your intelligence should have been satisfied with such a one-sided opinion of us as you seem to have. You have, pardon me, been unjust and narrow in your prejudices; you have not looked at the 'other side.' You say you know hardly anything of the Catholic faith, you never met a priest and you consider monks a product of a period you call the 'Dark Ages.' I do not blame you entirely, but I say, in justice to your intelligence, to your manhood, why not look at the other side and weigh both in the balance? Read up the Catholic side from Catholic sources. Study the Church from her own point of view, as a matter of justice, and then write to me, or, better still, come and see me, and I will give you the

very best hospitality of our monastery and introduce you to a dozen more monks, better men than I am." And I gave him a card with my name and that of my college on it.

He listened without a word and accepted the card. Very little more passed between us, and I began to say my office.

Not very long afterwards we approached Pittsburg. As we paused in Union Station I gave him my hand. He shook it warmly and gave me his card. I left the train, rushed over to an "accommodation" that took me to my destination, and lost sight of him. Many a time after he came to my mind, and I always uttered a prayer that he might at last see the "other side." But years passed by, and I entirely forgot him.

It was seven years after that journey from Chicago that a stranger rang the electric bell at our door and asked the porter for Father ———. He would not give his name.

I descended to the parlor. We looked closely at each other. Of course, I wore my habit.

"Are you Father ———?"

"I am, and you are Mr. ———, of Chicago. We traveled once together."

"How well you remember! I did not know you in your present garb. Yes, I am the man. Your patience and courtesy with me that day, when I almost insulted your faith, your priesthood and your vocation, deeply impressed me—impressed me and irritated me, too, I must confess. And when I got to Europe I

determined to study up the 'other side,' as you termed it, so as to prove by my own experience that I was right and you were wrong. I read Catholic books, visited Catholic churches and monasteries, and found, as is always the case with a conceited ignoramus, that I was wrong and you were right! I became a Catholic, and my wife and children, too. And as I always kept your card, I have come all this way to call on you and thank you for bringing me as you did to that 'other side,' where only the true faith is found."

Needless to say, there was a joyful hour spent that day, and I was made blissfully happy by the conviction that Providence may make use, in His ineffable designs on souls, of even an impatient and unworthy traveler.

Told By a Bishop

Two Bishops sat conversing in the evening twilight of a certain day. One was a visitor to the other's episcopal residence. Both were holy men, but one was particularly blessed by a wonderful regularity and progress in all church affairs in his diocese. His priests were earnest and faithful; his parishes filled with devoted laymen, and rarely, if ever, did the breath of scandal touch his see. And this was the visiting Bishop. The other Bishop was noting these facts in conversation and congratulating his visitor on these great blessings which had continued for many years.

"Hold!" said the latter. "Praise me not. You know not what you say. I have had nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with all this."

"What!" cried his friend, "nothing to do with it? You are jesting, my lord. You are surely jesting."

"No," returned his visitor solemnly. "I tell you truly the fact, and I thank my God, for it keeps me in humble trust at the feet of His providence."

"Explain this parable then," said his friend. "There are few dioceses more richly favored by heaven than yours, and while it is good to hear such expressions of humility, we all know better than your words."

"If you force me to it," said his visitor, "I shall tell you, but, remember, I tell you only the truth, and you must believe me.

"The night before my consecration I was on my knees alone, praying to God to have mercy on my unworthiness, and protesting I knew not how to carry the burden that would be placed on me the morrow, which never seemed so awful in the perspective as in that hour. Suddenly my surroundings left me. I seemed to be in a small church, and before me at some distance I saw a nun kneeling. Her face was lifted in earnest prayer, and while I gazed on it I seemed to see her heart, and the thoughts that were gathering on her lips. Her face was that of a complete stranger, a holy face, and one at that moment glowing with a light that enveloped her from the tabernacle door.

" 'Lord,' I heard her say, 'my poor life and works are so unworthy to offer Thee, but if they ever find favor in Thy sight, give me the merit of them, for I am worse than nothing. But make them aid some other soul, to whom they may be a little help in Thy service.'

"Then I heard an interior voice saying to me, 'Take up your burden without fear; you shall have the strength and merit of this soul's toil and prayer.'

"I came to myself with a start. I thanked God, and began my career with a strength not my own. You see, my brother, this success you speak of is not mine."

The Bishop had listened attentively.

"Have you ever seen this nun?"

"Never before or since."

"Do you remember her appearance?"

"I would know her countenance among a thousand. I can recall it even as I speak to you."

"A strange incident, truly," said the Bishop. "If I did not know you for a man of strongest sense and perception, I should call it a dream and question its influence."

"Do not speak so," said the visiting Bishop. "It has influenced my episcopal life in its strongest crisis. Although I have tried to underrate its effect in my pride, I have to acknowledge that it has helped me over and over again in the most perplexing moments of my life. Do not try to discredit it."

"Well, I will suspend my judgment," said his host. "God uses all instruments for His glory, none more powerful than prayer."

The Bishops parted for the night. Arrangements were made for the visitor to say Mass at a neighboring academy in the suburbs, where he would be accompanied by one of the resident priests.

Next morning the visiting Bishop and his companion were at the academy mentioned, and the convent Mass was said. At the time of Communion the Bishop was seen by the chaplain, as he communicated the Sisters, to stop, almost drop the ciborium and stagger, as if suddenly seized with illness. No one remarked the act but the chaplain at his side, and as the Bishop recovered himself quickly, no notice was taken of the matter. After the Mass was finished the Bishop dismissed the chaplain, and was escorted some time later by the reverend mother and assistants to breakfast.

"Mother," said the Bishop, "you will allow me to give all your Sisters my blessing before I leave?"

"Most assuredly," said the superioress. "It will be a great honor, and we appreciate your goodness; we only fear we may fatigue you, as we number nearly a hundred."

The Sisters were soon summoned. The Bishop received each one kindly and blessed her, looking at her keenly.

When all had retired he said: "I have not see them all, Mother, have I?"

"Surely you have, Bishop. I have missed no one. Have you, Mother assistant?" she said to the nun at her side.

"I think little Sister N—— was not here," said the assistant.

"Perhaps not," said the superioress. "She is so humble, my lord, that no doubt she went at once to her cows and chickens, never dreaming she would be asked to see so distinguished a visitor or receive his blessing."

"Send for her, Mother," said the Bishop kindly. "I must not leave one out."

Sister N—— was sent for. Confused and lowly, she came and knelt at the prelate's feet. Unused to the close proximity of rich purple and jeweled cross and ring, she could scarcely speak. But when her eyes were uplifted and her face was revealed to the Bishop, his soul was stirred to its depths, for he saw, as he did at the Communion rail, the face of the nun

whose life offering he had heard years ago, the night before his consecration.

"Mother, I should like to speak to good Sister N——," said the Bishop, and wonderingly the nuns withdrew.

Still kneeling, it was not long before the humble nun had been drawn by the Bishop's questions to speak of her inner life as she went about her duties to the useful dumb creatures that belonged to the convent farm. He saw that her constant prayer, her devoted service in the one duty she was supposed to be fitted for had raised her to lofty heights of union with God, so that, unknown to herself, it had supplemented the offering of her innocent soul which he had supernaturally heard, and made her so pleasing to the Most High that she had been the unconscious instrument of all his success in the vast field of labor his episcopal office had made for him.

With deep yet hidden emotion he blessed the wondering nun, and as her hard and toil-worn hands sought his ring, reverently to kiss it, he scarcely was able to whisper: "Sister N——, pray for me. Pray for the poor Bishop."

Tremblingly she withdrew, unconscious of the secret drama in which she was playing the magnificent part God had given her, and overpowered by the thought that one so holy and so great had stooped to ask *her* poor prayers.

The Reverend Mother and Sisters returned to the great Bishop. He did not long remain. On his

return to his host's residence, something told of deep emotion and strong yet calm feeling.

As the Bishops separated, their jeweled hands clasped, and they looked into each other's eyes.

"Bishop," said the guest, and his eyes were filled with a wonderful light, "rejoice with me and learn the lesson of prayer. I have found the true Bishop of my diocese."

Concerning Joe Wiggins

I WAS giving a mission in a little Pennsylvania town, and, as is always the case in a small place, there was considerable stir. The whole population was on the move, some through devotion, some through curiosity, some antagonistic.

I had introduced the Question Box and was looking over the questions preparatory to answering them. One impressed me—"Is the club or the saloon a civilizer or a demoralizer?"

While I searched my mind for the best answer, I went down town to the only barber shop. Now, Joe Wiggins was the barber, a character like Mr. Dooley—witty, racy, jolly and wise—and his shop was the Mecca of the town for gossip. Wiggins was no churchgoer, made no pretensions to sanctity, but was a good man; I heard he "ought to be" a Catholic; and I determined to make a strong effort for his soul.

Wiggins was very pleasant, though curt. While I was in the chair an old residenter, who had come back after some years' absence, dropped in to inquire about the townspeople.

After the customary salutations, the old resident asked for John Such-a-one.

"Down and out; all from booze," said Wiggins laconically.

"Don't say! That's bad! And where is Tom Such-a-one?"

"He's down and out; same reason."

A third was asked for.

"Down and out; likewise booze."

"Lud-a'mighty! what's the matter?"

"Booze houses let a man down so easy he never knows it till he's out," said Wiggins.

And I thought, as I listened, here is my answer for that query, and so I left the shop.

In the evening, when the audience was assembled, the question I have quoted was read out, and I said:

"My friends, let me reply to this question by stating a circumstance. I was in the barber's chair this afternoon (an observant and intelligent man, by the way, is the barber), and I heard an old resident, just returned to the town, ask first about one, then about another, and then about another old citizen. The answer was always the same: 'Down and out—from booze.'

"They were gone; they had passed into another world, and all that remained to say of them was in the striking words of my friend, the barber: 'Down and out; all from booze.'

"My friends, is not this question answered? Need I say more? You know the people of this place. Was my friend wrong? I leave you to come to conclusions."

I saw I had made a deep impression. The non-Catholic wife of the barber was present. She had been persuaded to come to the lecture by a friend. Of

course, she told her husband on her return home that he was honorably mentioned, and the good man was pleased with what he called an advertisement, and came the next night to show his appreciation.

He came again and again, and so did his wife. I learned he had great influence over his wife and might have brought her into the church if he had not been careless himself. I determined to talk to Wiggins, so I went first to see his wife. She said she was pleased with the lectures; a great many doubts were removed, and she would think about being a Catholic; in fact, I got her to acknowledge that if her husband would practice his faith she would join him.

I started for the barber shop. No one was there but Wiggins. He was glad to see me, and while he ministered to me I told him that I was pleased to see him at the lectures. Yes, he had been there, and had I not seen his wife? Yes, she was there, too. And had I heard correctly that she would be a Catholic if he practiced his faith?

"Who told you that?" said Wiggins.

"She did. And she is a good woman."

"She is, indeed," said Wiggins. "Well, she'll never have that excuse for not being a Catholic. I'll change my conduct and go back to church. I've been thinking about it, Father, ever since you came."

He was as good as his word. He went to confession, and his wife was received into the Church, and a neighbor who had gone through curiosity with her to the mission received instructions at the same time

and became a convert. So these three souls were led to God through the gossip of a barber shop and a query from the Question Box, and no doubt by the good prayers of those whose hearts are in the glorious work of saving souls.

This mission took place more than a year ago. I visited the town lately, and the first one I met was my friend Wiggins, now a good Catholic, together with his wife, although she met a domestic storm when her friends heard of her conversion.

Lovers of our holy faith, pray for the conversion of souls! Prayer is the uplifted hands that bring God's blessing and help to those who go forth to win souls to the truth.

The Choir Boy

WHEREVER THERE is a Sunday school and a train of altar boys, methinks, if they heard the following true story, some souls might be brought to the Master, and a little child would lead them.

About two years ago, while my choir boys were standing in the sacristy waiting for services to begin, I noticed for several Sunday evenings a little fellow about twelve years of age looking in the open door, and wistfully and earnestly watching the train of red cassocks and white surplices that were ready to march into the sanctuary.

"Who is that boy?" I asked on the third Sunday evening.

"Father, he's a Protestant. He is Charlie X——." I looked around, but Charlie had disappeared. However, the next Sunday night he was there, and when I went towards him he stood his ground like a man.

His big blue eyes widened when I spoke pleasantly to him.

"I am glad to see you, Charlie. Do you like to watch the choir boys?"

"Yes, sir." And an unspoken wish shone on his face. He was a bright, manly-looking lad, and I was pleased with his appearance.

After a moment, during which he never took his eyes from my face, he said:

"Father, could I be a choir boy?"—*Page 41.*

"Could I be a choir boy?"

"But you don't believe in the Catholic Church, Charlie."

"Won't you give me a chance, Father?"

The words and the lad's earnest face made a deep impression upon me. I turned away to look up a spare cassock and surplice in the wardrobe, but the boy mistook my movement for a refusal, and was turning slowly and sadly away when I called him. "Yes, my boy, I will give you a chance; put these on," and I helped him.

No king robed in ermine could have been more grave, even reverent, than this boy when, fully equipped in cassock and surplice and hymn book in hand, he stood beside a companion in the middle of the lines.

"Now, do as the other boys do," I whispered, as the train started into the sanctuary. I watched him from the door. He was reverent and attentive, even surpassing his Catholic companions in respectful devotion, and listening breathlessly to every word that fell from the lips of the priest who preached the evening sermon. Sunday nights we have sermons of a doctrinal nature, followed by Benediction. Charlie never flagged in attention. Every Sunday evening he was there, and the boys never once referred to his being a Protestant, at least in my hearing.

One evening he lingered after the boys had said good night.

"Well, Charlie," I said, "tired of being a choir boy?"

How he looked at me!

"Oh, Father! No, indeed. But, Father, may I be a Catholic?"

I put my arm around him—I couldn't help it, the little face was so serious. "Certainly, my son. But your parents must be consulted, and give consent."

"Why, Father, I brought them to church every Sunday to see me in my choir clothes, and mother says she would be glad if I were good enough to be a Catholic."

I inquired his address, and I went to see his parents soon after this. I found they were unbaptized Protestants, and, of course, not one of the six children had ever been baptized.

I talked about Charlie, and found both parents were not only willing to see Charlie instructed and baptized, but wished the same for themselves and the rest of the household.

The end is soon told.

I instructed the litttle apostle and his father and mother and baptized them and all the brothers and sisters, eight in all. He was soon confirmed and made his First Communion, and then encouraged and helped the rest. All are now fervent converts, and the little choir boy still is seen each Sunday in the sanctuary, rejoicing in his new-found treasure of faith and lifting his innocent heart in prayer.

Who knows but some day he may stand on the

altar steps and break the Bread of the Word to starving souls who are yearning for just such an apostle?

Friends, pass on this true story. Perhaps somewhere they may be another father and mother who need "a little child to lead them."

Doctor Thorn

"Please don't!"

Shrill and piercing rang the childish voice, and there was such a depth of indignation and horror in the tones that it made the lad pause and stare.

It was in the city of Philadelphia and at the time when long trains of mules dragged the freight cars through the streets from the depot to the suburbs to meet the locomotive. A long train of these animals had emerged from the wide gateway in Ninth street, pulling a train of cars. As the first car appeared the last mule caught its foot in one of the long chains, and by its frantic struggles threw the whole string of animals into disorder.

Two or three bystanders were delayed at the blocked-up passage, and among them, like a lost white dove, stood a tiny little girl, apparently not much more than six years old.

The mule driver was a tall lad, strong and active. He seemed furious at the accident, and, swearing volubly, lashed the mules with a thick whip all along the line, until he came to the poor creature with its foot caught. He dropped the whip and picked up a heavy stick with a nail in it, and with all his strength hurled it at the defenseless animal, which reared and plunged and trembled as the cruel nail tore a track down its flank. A trickling stream of blood began to flow.

The older spectators uttered a low murmur of disgust and indignation, but the child, her small arms extended, rushed forward, crying: "How dare you?"

The fellow stared at her. He was not radically bad, but his temper had got the better of him on this as on many other occasions. The mule had extricated its foot, and stood trembling and bleeding. The child's hat had fallen, and, quick as thought, she had pulled the dainty white cashmere shawl from her little shoulders, and with flashing eyes was standing almost under the mule's feet, trying to staunch the blood.

"Poor horsie!" she panted. "Poor horsie!"

The driver, with a reddening of his sunburnt face, which was rather handsome and intelligent, picked up the child tenderly, with the blood-stained shawl in her little hands, and put her down on the pavement.

Fresh from loving hands, dainty in her white embroidery, her rich brown curls falling on her shoulders, cheeks glowing with excitement, her eyes dilated, her little face a very picture of outraged sensibility, she was like a vision. She did not struggle as he lifted her, but drew back her baby figure like a little queen, and with scorn in every feature looked straight into his eyes, and flung her childish indignation at him in this phrase:

"You are a bad boy! God never *hits you;* and *you swear!*"

Just then a breathless nursemaid rushed into the little crowd and, with a cry, caught up the child in her arms, kissing her.

"O, 'Queenie,' why did you run off? We were all frightened to death!"

And she bore her off, talking all the way.

The mules went on; the cars began to move; the few spectators dispersed. But the driver picked up a little ring, a battered turquoise ring, from the street, looked around to see if anybody noticed him, then kissed it and put it in his pocket, murmuring to himself: "She'll never wear it again; it's mashed up like I am. They called her 'Queenie,' and I be blowed if she *didn't* look like a young queen, that baby!"

All day long the sweet little face, with its moist gray eyes, was before him. All day long he checked the rising oath. He was almost tender to the *last mule,* for when he looked at the red line on its flank he thought of the words, "God never hits you, and you swear!"

He was not a low-born, common lad, and he was ashamed of himself. Circumstances had forced him into his present occupation. That evening he went to the superintendent's office and gave up his job, saying to himself: "I'll find another and a better one. It would break my dead mother's heart if she knew I drove mules and swore. God *'hit'* me to-day, Queenie, but it was with your baby hand."

At the same hour Queenie sat on her papa's knee in her luxurious home and told him how the "poor horsie bled when the bad boy beat it. "And," said she, "papa, I lost my pretty turquoise ring!"

"Well, Queen Ann," he replied, as he pushed back

her curls and looked lovingly into the sweet eyes, "you shall have another ring if you promise me you will never run under another mule's feet again. Will you?"

"Queen Ann" puckered up her rosy mouth as she shook her curls, and then, with her arms around her loving father's neck, she sealed the promise with that sweetest of all tributes, an innocent heart's kiss.

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Twenty-five years pass away. The lad of seventeen is a man, with a sprinkling of gray on his head. The baby girl has bloomed into the maturity of beautiful womanhood. They have never met since.

. . . . . .

A November day, soft, hazy and beautiful—a day when showers of crimson and yellow leaves fall by the roadside. In the city the streets are filled with a gay crowd of people, charmed by the last smile of autumn. In an attic room of a suburban house, in the city of P——, lay a sick girl. The whitewashed walls on one side sloped to the shape of the roof. A little window, hung with a curtain of thin black stuff, subdued the light and admitted the warm air. The bed was of straw, on a cot, broken, but held up by a couple of chairs. A little square piece of carpet lay beside it on the floor, while further off another piece lay before the washstand, which was only a frame of iron wire, holding a tin basin painted blue and an old pitcher cracked and seamed with putty. A wooden form with two narrow open shelves made a toilet table

and towel rack. The remains of three cane-seat chairs, with boards over the seats, stood about the room. On one of these was an open valise, out of which peeped embroidery and painting materials of rich quality. There was a grotesque mixture of refined taste and incongruous surroundings, a placing of things for effect, which pitifully told that the occupant of the room knew what the elegancies of life were and had once enjoyed them.

On this November day, when all without was mellow and radiant, the sick girl lay back on her pillow, just where the brightness fell through the little draped window. One hand clasped a crucifix of peculiar design. Its color was yellow, and there were fourteen small, circular insertions of mother-of-pearl upon it, each marked with the letters "Sta" and a Roman number. The Saviour's figure was of silver. The crucifix was a precious relic to its possessor, for it was made of olive wood from the garden of Gethsemane, and was enriched with the indulgences of the "Way of the Cross." It was intended for the consolation of the sick, as the good friend said who obtained this treasure for her, and was a mine of spiritual wealth. Poor sufferer, it helped her so much to be patient. Just now she looked very peaceful, for the atmosphere of prayer was about her. A face still soft and round, a chin dimpled like a child's, a low, white forehead, blue-gray eyes and a sensitive mouth. ever changing, yet always sweet, such was the aspect of the girl who lay there quite still and all alone. She was accustomed to solitude; there

were few who cared for her, because there were few who knew her. Yet that dying girl of seventeen had a mind and heart pure and beautiful and a great soul. A footstep on the stairs outside brought a gleam of brightness to her pale face, and she smiled a greeting to the visitor who entered after an emphatic knock. "I am so glad to see you, doctor," she said, as she held out her hand.

"Alone again. Always alone. This is outrageous!" And the physician, his clean-cut features darkened by a frown, drew one of the chairs to the side of the bed and carefully sat down. There was a breadth of forehead in the man's face that told of thought, a firmness in the square chin that told of will, and a kindness in the brown eyes that told of heart. His face relaxed into a smile at the evident pleasure of his patient in his presence.

"I don't feel lonely, doctor," said the cripple. "I've just finished my Stations."

"Finished your what?" asked the doctor, with wide-opened eyes.

"My Stations. See this crucifix, and——"

"Oh-h-h!" said the physician, with a shrug of impatience. "You Roman Catholics have such a lot of praying arrangements that one must be always prepared for the unexpected. But, my child," he added, seeing the pained look on the girl's face, "if all Catholics prayed as you do, on their crosses and strings of beads, I'd take my chances for 'kingdom come' with them. But they don't, half of them, until they come

to die, and then they do the whole business up in a hurry; that is, if they get the time. Pray ahead, Mary, and put me in the prayers, too. I haven't time to pray. You are better to-day. Keep on with the nourishment, and don't take any medicine unless the pains return. I'll give them a raking downstairs for leaving you alone so much."

"Please don't, doctor; they are all so busy. They come up whenever they can. Don't say a word, doctor," pleaded the cripple. "It does me so much good to see you, doctor; you are so very kind to me. May God bless you." And her eyes moistened.

"Pshaw!" said the doctor, twisting his watchchain between his fingers. "I don't see how you can lie here for months, in such a place, and never get lonely. You won't let me fix it up, either. Such a rickety-looking place as it is!"

"It's good enough, doctor. You know I won't be here long, and what is the use of wasting money? I'm comfortable and very happy. My religion makes up for everything."

The doctor looked around the little attic, then at the sweet, pale face, whistled softly, and said:

"Well, as I said before, you're a queer set, and if I had time I would be an R. C. myself. There is always something pulling me in that direction, whatever it is. Now, don't begin to preach," he added, as he saw the girl's face glow and her lips unclose eagerly. "I must be going; I stay here longer than anywhere else. But what are you looking at?"

He had seen her eyes following his fingers twisting his watchchain.

"Ah! you are looking at this battered little baby ring," he continued. "Well, the next time I come I'll tell you all about it, for it has a history."

"Perhaps," said the invalid, "it will be painful. I always fancied that ring belonged to your little daughter. I often wished to ask you about it, but I feared to sadden you."

A merry laugh sounded through the room.

"Bless your heart, no. I am an old bachelor. But that baby ring has my life romance in it. It happened twenty-five years ago, when I was your age. Wait till I come again. Good-by."

And he was gone—the bright, kind man who had done so much to alleviate her sufferings, who had come week after week, and paid her rent and brought her medicines, and procured her light work, and had treated her with such fatherly care that her heart overflowed with gratitude and sent up to heaven daily petitions that the light of faith might be given to him. And as her rosary beads slipped through her thin fingers, from which the brush and embroidery needle had long since dropped, she prayed to our Lady that this manly soul might not perish.

. . . . . .

Mary Thurston was an orphan; a girl finely educated and bred, but reduced to poverty by one of those reverses that are of such common occurrence in the world. She had influential friends in England, her

mother had told her, but of them she knew nothing. Only a year ago Dr. Thorn had been called to her widowed mother's bedside, and had seen her die, with a heart-breaking look fixed on this lonely girl. A kind-hearted man (although people who did not know him said his name suited him), he pitied the desolate child, and did not lose sight of her, for his practiced eye saw signs of the paralysis that threatened her. When it came he did his best for her, but he knew she would soon follow her mother.

Dr. Thorn's interest in his patient never relaxed, and now every day he ran in for a moment or two to brighten the little attic with pleasant words that few others suspected he could use; wondering why she never complained, why she never frowned, never expressed any longing to live, never seemed to be lonely, although, after the kind, poor people downstairs had attended to her simple wants, she was left alone hour after hour. The kind-hearted doctor did not know that a divine Visitor sometimes came to that little home in the early morning and left His peace in that pure young heart and made it happy. Though not a Catholic, Dr. Thorn had little respect for any other creed. He thought religion was not a necessity for him, because "he had not time," but, as he told Mary, something was pulling him in her direction, whatever that something was.

This and much more did Mary tell the dear Sister of Mercy who often called to see her, and who cheered her solitude and helped her to pray. At every visit of

the nun, when the usual prayers were over, Mary would whisper: "Now, the 'Salve Regina' for Dr. Thorn's conversion," and Sister Hilda would utter the beautiful prayer aloud and feel herself strangely moved to pray for this good man whom she had never seen, and whose kindness to a lonely sick girl was the only claim to her interest; and in the convent chapel Dr. Thorn's name was mentioned many a time in fervent petition.

About a month after the day we have mentioned Dr. Thorn had time to tell the story of the battered little ring to the invalid, whose changing face and breathless interest betrayed her emotion. Of course, Dr. Thorn was the lad who drove the mules twenty-five years before at the Ninth street depot in the distant city. He it was who picked up the little turquoise ring that Queenie had dropped and bore it as a talisman through his life. The vision of that white-robed child and the amazed look of those shocked gray eyes were in his dreams constantly, and the clear, bell-like voice, with its quaint, childish reproach, rang with an undying echo in his memory.

He told Mary how he had given up his situation that very evening; how he left the city; how he struggled against rebuffs and disappointments; how he was employed in a medical college, where his early education was renewed; how, at last, he began to study medicine, and after much patience and untold difficulties took his diploma and began to practice; how he steadily gained ground, made himself a name, and

now he was above want and far up in his profession. "And if I am alone in the world," said he, "it is, first, because when I began I had not the means to support a wife, and, second, because it seems to me that some other chapter in my life is to come first, whatever it is."

And then Dr. Thorn laughed, and pushed back the iron-gray hair from his handsome brow and stood up to go. He had told the story in just ten minutes, and had told it in a way some people would have called blunt; but Mary knew his great heart and valued his confidence. She looked up to him with filial reverence and deep devotion, and loved him as she might have loved the father she had lost before she was old enough to understand. Dr. Thorn knew this, and valued her appreciation more than he was conscious of. As he bent to shake hands with her, the little ring hung close to her eyes. She asked:

"What became of little Queenie?"

"I never saw her again, and never expect to. I left her hundreds of miles away from here. But what would make it easy for me to believe in images, relics and such Catholic things is the way I feel about that little ring. Good-by."

Mary lay quite still, thinking. Was it not strange that such a little thing should have made such a grand man as Dr. Thorn? She was somewhat disappointed, too. This was not the early life she had pictured for her hero. But then she reflected: "The end crowns the work." The real nobility of the man was there all

the time, waiting to be called forth. She tried to picture how sweet and beautiful little Queenie must have looked in her impulsive rashness, as she rushed forward, pleading for the poor mule. Then she thought of Dr. Thorn as he described himself at the moment, and she began to pray that she might find Queenie, and together they would wrestle for this noble soul and bring it into the fold. And then, from utter weariness, she slept. When she opened her eyes two Sisters of Mercy were in the room, and from the light she knew it was about sundown. She seemed so well and talked so brightly that Sister Hilda said:

"Why, Mary, you must have taken a new lease of life."

And then Mary told the nun the doctor's story. As the tale went on in the invalid's broken voice a delicate flush crept into Sister Hilda's face, and its expression was one of far-away thought. As Mary closed she looked up to hear the admiration she expected her dear Sister to express, but the latter was silent. When she did speak, it was in a hushed voice, as if she had been disturbed at prayer.

"It is strange, Mary," said Sister Hilda, "how many ways God takes to bring souls to Him. Let us keep on praying for that good doctor. And now it is getting late, dear, so good-by till to-morrow."

And before Mary had realized it she had pressed her hand and noiselessly passed out of the door. Mary was disappointed, nay, astonished. Why had her dear

Sister been so abrupt? She pondered over it, but could not solve the problem.

Night fell, and a wretched night it was for the poor sufferer. Her brightness during the afternoon was the flickering brightness of a lamp that is going out. At sunrise the next morning, when they came to minister to her wants, they found her so much worse that they thought she was dying. Quickly the priest was sent for, and her good friend, Dr. Thorn. When the latter arrived he knew at once the end was near. Mary smiled feebly as he entered.

"It has come at last, doctor," she whispered. "Won't you stay with me till I die?"

The doctor nodded his head. Somehow this poor, lonely girl seemed very dear to him. He cared for very, very few, and he would miss her out of his own lonely life.

The priest knew her well. Her preparation for death had begun long ago. Holy Viaticum was received, Extreme Unction and the last absolution given. Dr. Thorn watched the whole proceedings. He saw the lines of pain in the white face settle into a peace which even physical agony could not efface. Then the priest said he would send the Sisters to her bedside. Mary's eyes told her gratitude. She was not able to speak. Dr. Thorn sat beside her, his finger on her pulse, his fine face grave and very pale. The silence was broken only by the labored breathing of the sufferer and the subdued movements of the few neighbors

who were there to show charitable sympathy for the poor, dying girl.

Then the Sisters came. One glance was enough. Softly moving to the head of the bed, Sister Hilda detached poor Mary's cherished crucifix from its nail and laid it in the cold hand. Taking a blessed candle from the little table she lighted it; then, sprinkling holy water on the pillow, she signed the cold forehead with the cross, and, kneeling, began to read the beautiful prayers for the dying. When the clear, sweet, bell-like voice rose softly on the hush of the death chamber, Dr. Thorn raised his head with a startled expression. The nun's face, framed in its close, black bonnet, was turned full towards him, every line of it absorbed in the solemn and holy duty of the moment. The gray eyes were never lifted.

The Sister prayed and Dr. Thorn listened. What was it in that voice and in those prayers? He had never felt like this before. God was surely there. There was a faith that held out its arms and drew him to its heart. He felt the touch of grace, and, bowing his head, he murmured "Credo!"

Suddenly there was silence. Mary's eyes opened. She tried to smile; then her lips moved. Dr. Thorn bent to catch the words, very low and broken:

"Doctor—I would—be glad—to die if—you could try—to believe my faith—Sister and I—have prayed—so long. Won't you?"

"I'll try, Mary," was the husky answer. And in his heart he said: "A second time led by a child."

A radiant look lit up the thin face, then a mute glance toward the kneeling Sister, as if she transferred the trust to her; and then a little quiver passed through her frame. Again the voice of prayer began, in plaintive, hushed tones. A few more sighs, a long, long breath; another, then stillness.

"All is over," said the doctor, as he rose and abruptly left the room. "Eternal rest grant to her, O Lord." The old, sweet petitions for the dead fell on the awed stillness, and when the last "Amen" was said all arose to gaze at the marble face with its closed eyes. Each felt it was well with the child, and none would dare to wish her back. Dr. Thorn assumed the responsibility of the funeral. When it was over he lingered a moment at the lonely grave, then bent his steps toward the city and wended his way to the convent. He had thought much since that deathbed scene, and thought with him was the herald of prompt action. But first he must verify his almost positive certainty. He came in sight of the tall building. He knew it well, for he had passed it frequently, although he had never entered its doors. Nor was his name unknown to the Sisters, for they had heard of his goodness and kindness from the poor they visited. He entered and sent up his card, asking to see the Sister who assisted at Mary Thurston's deathbed.

In a few moments a tall, queenly nun entered with quiet step. The sweet serenity and peace of the beautiful face touched him, and the subdued light of the gray eyes flashed conviction on him. He rose.

"I have called, Sister," he said, with respectful dignity, "to tell the friend of the poor child we buried to-day that I intend to keep the promise I made at her bedside in your presence. I do believe in her faith and yours, and I am resolved this very night to take steps towards professing it. But I beg you not to deem me impertinent if I ask a question that will throw light on a starting point in my life, which hitherto has been like a faith of its own. Did poor Mary ever speak of me to you?"

"She did, doctor," said the nun gently, "and I have helped her to pray for you for a long time past. I thank God that a noble mind like yours will at last be safely anchored where alone it will find peace."

"But the question, Sister. It is this: I owe the development of all that is good in me to an incident that happened twenty-five years ago in a distant city, and of which poor Mary has surely told you."

Sister Hilda bowed her head, and her eye rested for a moment on the worn little turquoise ring that hung at the doctor's watchchain. The doctor followed her look, smiled slightly and then resumed gravely:

"It seemed to me when I saw you, Sister, at that dear child's deathbed, and heard your voice, I knew you. Those twenty-five years rolled back, and that incident was present and living, and you were the angel of the scene. Am I wrong?"

The nun smiled.

"Twenty-five years ago, doctor, I was a willful little child, much too small to do good to any one."

"But your name," persisted Dr. Thorn; "your first name only?"

"My name was Annie," said the nun, hesitatingly; "but at home those who loved me called me 'Queenie.'"

How She Converted Her Pastor

In a far-off Western city a popular Protestant church was presided over by a devoted rector. This rector was a man well read, large-minded and intelligent; kind of heart, full of zeal for his Master's house, devoted to his parish and generous to the poor. His people were, in return, devoted to him, and particularly the lady members of his congregation. It was with deep sorrow that they noted his health beginning to fail, and a movement was set on foot by which he was enabled to go to Los Angeles, in California, for rest and cure. There were many who paid him visits of farewell, and among them a devoted woman who had placed much of her time at his disposal in the charitable work of the parish. To her he promised a faithful correspondence.

As weeks wore on his letters came regularly to her and were promptly answered by his parishioner. Suddenly her keen eye remarked a change. A note of religion never heard before, a leaning towards the dreaded Church she always hoped he, with her, despised and abhorred. There was a ring of "Papistry" in his expressions, and with his returning health came an awful fear on her part that something had happened in his soul which had drawn him towards "Rome."

At last she could bear the agony no longer; she

asked him the question point blank: "Could he—a pastor of the High Church Episcopal—could he have gone over to Rome?"

The question given, the answer came back promptly, and with a glad "Thank God! Yes, I am a Catholic. I have had time to pray and to study in these long weeks. I have read deeply; I have gone over the dark pathways in which Newman groped when he sent forth his 'Lead, Kindly Light;' I have struggled and battled with the same convictions; I saw the way at last. Again I fought and prayed. Oh, how I prayed! And the scales fell off my eyes. I saw, and I believe. Yes, I am a true, sincere Roman Catholic. God be praised for His goodness to me!"

The lady burst into tears when she read this letter from her guide and friend. The world seemed dark enough to her now, when her light was thus extinguished. Chaos seemed open before her, and gloom all around her. Her heart was sad and sorrowful; she was like one dazed. The very salt of the earth had lost its savor. The path to higher things was lost, and her heart cried out because of the defection of her revered pastor and guide. What was to be done? With a woman's heart and unreasoning logic, she determined to leave home and go to him, to show him his terrible blunder before his people knew it, to implore him to look back on the step he had taken, to see his error, to tear aside the influence, whatever it was, that blurred his heretofore clear vision and restore his own true self again. She was truly sincere in her

grief, and sincere in her desire to set him on the "right road" again.

This woman was upright in her own convictions, and had a true heart. She believed she was right, and could not imagine whence the baleful influence came that so changed a strong man's faith to a creed full of "idolatry and superstition." Being in deep earnest, she prayed; prayed daily, hourly, for the strayed shepherd, and then made preparations to go to Los Angeles and plead with her recreant pastor.

But he was to know nothing about it. And so this good woman, with a heart full of sorrow and lips murmuring prayer, began her long journey. The days passed on and she was soon in Los Angeles, and the meeting between pastor and parishioner was one of mutual pleasure until the subject of religion was broached, and then she told him how her heart had bled over his falling away from the purity of faith, how she wept over the departure of his soul for "Babylon," His merry laugh jarred upon her sensitive spirit, and in pity he began to explain his position, his reasons, his convictions.

At first she was an obstinate listener, unyielding and determined. But he did not give up. He bade her pray, and then she listened. He led her day after day with his old strength and irresistible force through the paths he had gone over, and because she was sincere grace entered her soul. Weeks went by, and she began to waver. She acknowledged gradually what she never believed could be possible—the integrity,

truth, the rights of the Holy Catholic Church. At last she was conquered, and when her old minister brought her to a priest and she made her submission to the grand old Church that Christ Himself established on earth, and declared herself a sincere Catholic, his joy was only equaled by her own. She received the sacraments in due time, and no new-made bride could have radiated more happiness, more gladness than this good woman.

"I came to convert you," she said to her former minister; "to bring you back to Protestantism, but, lo! the tables are turned; you have converted me. I prayed for you, and this is the answer to my prayer. I am not afraid to face the whole world in the strength of my new-found faith. God be thanked! His kindly light has led me."

She returned to her home, and only two months ago God called her to her eternal home in heaven. Her death was a great shock to her friend and old pastor, who could not but see God's finger in all that had transpired.

He still lives, and we must pause here. We can only say what is too well known, that prayer, sincere, heartfelt prayer, unlocks the doors of God's grace and pours it out lavishly on the earnest seeker after truth.

"Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find."

The Lady and the Bishop

It was a social gathering. Not an "affair," in the exaggerated sense of the word, as used by "the exclusive set," but a dignified, elegant assembly of prominent gentlemen and ladies, ecclesiastics, United States Senators and their wives. Among the latter was a charming woman, who, as she moved through the crowded rooms, was followed by many admiring eyes. Suddenly a Bishop of the Catholic Church appeared, the royal purple and the episcopal ring distinguishing him from all around him. The lady paused in her smiling conversation, and advancing towards the prelate gracefully and reverently knelt and kissed his ring. There was a lull in the polite hum of subdued conversation, and when this splendid woman said: "I want your blessing, Bishop," the prelate himself was filled with surprise.

"Certainly, my child; but I did not know you were a Catholic."

"Indeed, I am not a Catholic, Bishop, but I was reared at a convent school, and my training there was so beautiful, and the influence of the nuns so holy, that I keep up some of their teachings, you see."

"And did you never inquire into the religion that was the inspiration of all these beautiful teachings?" said the Bishop.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Bishop," said the smiling lady,

"but I stopped short when it came to your doctrine of transubstantiation. My difficulties are there, and they are insuperable."

"But you still revere the Catholic Church, at least in its ministers, I see."

"Oh, yes!" said she. "I always salute a Bishop when I meet him, as I have done you; and, Bishop, I say the prayer the nuns call the 'Angelus' every morning, noon and night. I think it so beautiful. I suppose my piety ceases after that."

The Bishop looked his surprise, but in giving his blessing he said: "Continue, my child, to say that beautiful prayer—the 'Angelus'—and your difficulties about the Real Presence will soon vanish."

With a graceful gesture the lady disappeared, and the Bishop thought how hard it is for wealth, and beauty, and society—in a word, how hard it is for the worldly to turn their whole hearts to God. But he prayed for her and saw her frequently after that.

Years passed on. She was stricken with a lingering illness. God's time was at hand, and the reward of that little act of reverence, and the fruit of her triple Angelus was coming to her. In a moment of grace she responded to God's call. She sent for a priest, was instructed fully in the faith she had ignored, and with most edifying sentiments died a holy and happy Catholic death.

One Night in the Isolated Ward

It was 7 o'clock in the evening, and the hospital bell clanged loudly. The portress went promtply to the door, and found there a youth of nineteen years, whose flushed face and eyes that burned in their sockets like living coals told at a glance their story of desperate illness.

"I want to see the superior," said he.

The superior was called, and the young man, who had been given an armchair, handed her a letter, a communication from the principal physician on the hospital staff, requesting the superior to admit the bearer and place him in the isolated ward, as he had every symptom of the dread small-pox.

Now, at the time of which we write there was no municipal hospital in the city, nor was there what is called a "pest house." All diseases were sent to the Sisters' Hospital, and were there, as is always the case, humanely and properly treated. The reason why this Sisters' Hospital had an isolated small-pox ward was as follows: There was no marine hospital in the city, and the authorities had contracted with the Sisters to care for the marines, or the river men, who worked for the Government. Some ten months before a packet had come up the river and was stranded in low water. Eight or ten hands, all Negroes, had remained on board, waiting for the water to rise. Idling away

the days, small-pox broke out among them, and all were stricken. Application was made at the Sisters' Hospital, and in pursuance of their contract the Sisters accepted the cases, prepared a ward entirely apart from the hospital proper and appointed the nurses to care for the loathsome disease. Several of the men succumbed, and under the religious care of the Sisters their deaths were holy and happy. The majority of the number got well, however, and the ward had been cleaned out and fumigated, and had been vacant for some time. But here was an occupant, and no time was lost preparing a clean, comfortable bed for him. He was conducted to the ward and told to prepare for a hot bath.

"There is no use," said the young man, "for me to take remedies, for I shall die to-night. I came here only to see a priest."

"But," said the Sister who was placed in charge of the patient, "the priest does not live at this hospital. He has finished his duties here and gone to the parish house, and will not return until early morning, when he will say Mass. We shall bring him to you as soon as he comes."

"But it will be too late," said the young man. "I shall not be living then. I must see him to-night."

"Why, the doctor did not say you were in a dangerous condition," said the Sister. "Had you not better submit to treatment and wait till morning?"

"I beg you," said the patient, "I implore you to send

"I am dying now, though you do not know it."—*Page 69.*

for a priest. I assure you I will be dead in the morning. I am dying now, though you do not know it."

He did not seem in the slightest danger of immediate death, but his manner startled the nun, in spite of her convictions. She spoke through the tube used for that purpose (for she, too, was isolated) to the superior, and urged her to send a messenger for the hospital chaplain. The superior rather reluctantly complied, thinking the request somewhat unreasonable, yet wishing rather to err on the safe side.

When the nurse told the young man the priest had been sent for, he was greatly relieved, and when the Sister bathed his feet and saw that he had remedies and went to bed, he turned to her and said:

"I want to tell you why I want the priest. I am an orphan since I was twelve years old, and am bound out to a farmer who sends me to the market every day with a load of produce. This morning I came in as usual, and was taken with this sickness. Some friends brought me to the doctor, and he gave me the letter I brought here. When the doctor said I was going to be pretty sick, I told him I knew it, but that I wanted first to see a priest. 'Well,' said he, 'I'll send you where you will see a priest and all your religious needs will be attended to. I'll send you to the Sisters' Hospital.' I was glad to come, because I believe in Catholic teachings and was afraid I had waited too long before——"

"Then you are not a Catholic?" exclaimed the Sister, in amazement.

"No; I am not of any religion. The people I live with have no religion, either. But I want to tell you something before I die."

Here the Sister smiled, for while the young man was flushed and feverish, there was no other visible sign of the disease, and least of all of death.

"You don't think I will die? Well, time will tell. There is something within me that speaks louder than words."

"But how did you come to want a priest so much?" said the Sister, feeling strangely moved.

"I had two friends, Catholic boys of my own age. We met every market day, and they took me to their Mass. It was a poor little place, their church, but the priest was a fine man; and when he spoke it went to my heart, and I liked to hear him. And when church was over the boys explained what the priest said about saving your soul. I often thought about it, but had no chance to ask any one. About three weeks ago this priest told the people that the crowd was getting more than the little church could hold, and he wanted to build a new church. And he said every little would help, and that even a dollar would go into the fund and get God's blessing. 'And besides,' said he, 'I will pray every day at my Mass for those who will make their offerings to the building of God's house, that they may have as their reward a happy life and a holy death.'"

The patient paused a moment, as if hesitating about his next communication.

"And what else?"

"Well," said the young man, "I had only a dollar of my own, and I walked up to the priest after the Mass and I said to him: 'Father, this is all I have, but I hope you won't refuse it because I am poor and not of your way of believing. I'd like to see that church built.' He looked into my face, took my hand and said: 'My son, you will not die until you are of our way of believing. I shall pray for you every day at Mass that you may become a good Catholic.'

"I didn't tell my two friends anything about it, but when I found myself getting deadly sick this morning I put the horse and wagon in the hands of people that I know, and when the doctor said I should come here, I was determined to see a priest first of all and find out the way to die in the true faith."

Just here the messenger announced through the speaking tube that the chaplain had arrived and was about coming to the patient. The Sister told the young man, and he was overjoyed.

She went to the little room adjoining the ward and met the priest, to whom she briefly told the circumstances.

The chaplain was soon at the bedside of the patient. A few questions brought out the fact that he had never been baptized, and as he insisted, with a pertinacity that was remarkable and impressive, that he was going to die, the chaplain, after asking a few questions, baptized him.

"There are some other sacraments," said the young

man. "I heard them talked about in church. Can't I be anointed, and could I receive Holy Communion?"

The chaplain was amazed. He questioned the young man, and obtained a detailed account of his life; and after instructing him for some time, proposed waiting until the morning, as there was no apparent danger, and he would come a little earlier to say his Mass. It was now after 11 o'clock.

"Father," pleaded the young man, "I want so much to be an entire Catholic; it will be too late in the morning. Something tells me so. Won't you do everything before you go?"

The priest hesitated, and then, unable to withstand his own conviction that here was a most extraordinary case, told the patient he would anoint him and give him Holy Viaticum.

Most reverently did the poor youth receive these sacraments. When all was over and the priest was about to leave, he suggested some aspirations that might comfort the patient during the night. Finally he said:

"I will see you early in the morning. Good-night, my son."

"Good-night, Father, and good-by. And I thank you from my heart."

The Sister sat quietly at a little distance from the bed, her beads in her hands. The clocks chimed out midnight, and then the small hours. Every now and then the young man would repeat aloud the aspirations the priest had suggested over and over again. About

3 o'clock he was silent, and the Sister went over to the pillow, hoping he had fallen asleep. One glance told her pacticed eye that the agony of death was there. She repeated the prayers for the departing soul, and within the brief hour he had passed away in his white baptismal robes to the presence of his Father in heaven, who had won this guileless soul, and by ways men can never understand brought him through the dark valley of death surrounded by all the graces of redemption.

The Sister closed his eyes, folded his hands over the crucifix that lay on his breast and softly left the room, breathing a "De Profundis."

It was nearly 5 o'clock as she passed the great time-piece in the corridor, and although it was so early, she saw the familiar figure of the chaplain advancing towards her.

"I could not get our patient out of my head all night," said the priest, "so I have come early. How is he this morning?"

"He is with God," reverently said the nun. "He died at 4 o'clock."

. . . . . .

Was it because he was a lonely orphan that our Father in heaven opened His arms and gave him this intuition of death? Was it the clean, honest example of those Catholic working boys that made him think of his soul? Was it his own humble charity that prompted him to help with his mite the building of God's temple? Or, most of all, was it the divine effi-

cacy of the Holy Mass, wherein his name was mentioned, that procured this happy death?

We know not, we dare not say. But we know that all of these things are tremendous forces impelling the soul towards a glorious salvation.

Let those who read ponder over this true story.

Kitty

He was a wealthy man. Fortune had smiled upon him. He had a prosperous business, a luxurious home and several beautiful daughters; but since he had married his Protestant wife, nearly thirty years before, he had forsaken the faith of his childhood and become what is known as a backslider. He had never approached the sacraments since. Still, his daughters had gone to the convent school and were reared in the faith; moreover, he had two saintly sisters who were nuns and who constantly stormed heaven for their brother's conversion all these years. So far all seemed in vain.

If there was one of his children the merchant loved better than the rest, it was his brown-eyed, curly-headed Kitty; and Kitty was the most pious and demure of the whole family, and she idolized her father.

As years passed by and Kitty grew to young womanhood, a fervent Catholic, the defection of her idolized parent preyed on her soul. Her mother had never been a Catholic and Kitty looked for a miracle some day, because she was so good, and God would reward that. But to think that her dear father had been for so many years a Catholic, and now was growing older and harder in his refusal to return to the Church of his fathers, was a trial that nearly broke her heart. And it was of no use to speak of it. Every

other subject was tolerated and encouraged, but this was a forbidden topic. No one was permitted to speak of religion to the prosperous merchant.

One day Kitty announced to her father she was going to enter a convent. Had a bolt of thunder fallen out of a clear heaven at his feet he could not have been more horrified. Storming, threatening, tears, caresses, entreaties were useless, and after many weary scenes Kitty became a novice in a neighboring convent. When the step was taken the merchant seemed harder and more unapproachable than before; but his love for his daughter impelled him to visit her, and each visit convinced him of her increasing happiness, and while she never breathed the forbidden subject, her soul unceasingly prayed for his conversion.

One day word was sent him she was sick and was in the convent hospital. He flew to her bedside and found her very ill indeed. He begged to have the best medical skill, the latest appliances; and all he asked was granted. Everything money could control was brought to bear on her illness, but she grew steadily worse. All her family had visited her, and to their anxious tears the physicians could only reply: "No one can tell;" but to each other they said, "She cannot survive."

Kitty's father hovered silently about the bed with a broken heart. White as a liily the thin face lay on its pillow, and the curly head he loved seemed so inexpressibly dear that he felt as if he could not face the reality.

"Oh, Kitty!" he moaned; "don't die, my child! I can't stand it!"

She opened her brown eyes and her lips moved.

Looking straight into his face she whispered distinctly: "I won't die, papa, if you come back to the Church and be a good Catholic."

"Oh, I will, Kitty," sobbed the father; "I will. I promise you, may God help me."

A faint smile hovered on Kitty's face. The look of anguish and the ghastly color of death seemed to vanish. She closed her eyes and silently and long her father knelt beside her, registering his vow in heaven. The physicians came, felt her pulse, and a bright look came into their faces. They motioned the father into another room.

"There is a change for the better," they said to him. "The crisis is past. We will let nature perfect her condition. It was a close call."

He did not reply, but his heart told him he knew more than the physicians.

Kitty got well. Her father redeemed his promise, and when she was able to resume her religious apparel he came to her and told her he had made his peace with God. He had returned to the house of his Father.

Kitty is still living, and so is her venerable parent. He has remained steadfast and is a fervent Christian Catholic gentleman. More than one marble tablet has recorded (to his chagrin) his deeds of charity and generosity to God's house and God's poor, but he

awaits his last call with faith and humility, helping where he can his daughter in her cherished vocation, and making good the years he passed out of the fold.

The scene in that hospital room is stamped on the memory of father and daughter and is recorded by the angels of God.

Who will deny the apostolate there fulfilled?

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Pray, then, daughters of parents who have drifted with the world away from the old Church. Pray for their conversion, and your faith shall be rewarded.

A Brother's Prayers

In the great city of Chicago one afternoon two Sisters of Mercy on a sick call, in their close black bonnets and long cloaks, were passing swiftly and silently along a quiet street. Standing on the steps of a respectable dwelling, watching them coming towards her, was a little girl. As they passed without having noticed her, she sprang after them, and when near enough she whispered:

"Dear ladies, we are not Catholics, but papa is so sick we are afraid he will die, and won't you ask God to spare him to us?"

"Where is he?" said the Sister.

"We live there," said the child, pointing to the dwelling which she had just left; "but papa hates Catholics so much that he might frighten you with his temper, and besides he might be angry at me if he thought I asked you in. Just drop in by accident and don't let on you know he is sick."

The Sisters smiled and went their way.

Their errand accomplished, they were on their way back when an inspiration entered the heart of the senior Sister, who said to her companion:

"Here is a soul to save! In the name of our Lord, let us strive for it. We will visit that child's father. Something impels me to do so."

"I have the same thought," said the other. "Let us pray that we may accomplish some good."

In silence they proceeded and soon reached the house. They entered the vestibule and touched the bell. There was no response. Then they knocked gently at the door of a room.

"Come in," said a masculine voice.

They entered, and in the rear of a pleasant apartment which was fitted up as a bed room they saw a rather handsome man sitting up in bed and reading a newspaper. He was far gone in consumption. At sight of his visitors a furious expression overspread his face, pale and emaciated as it was. Raising his voice, he cursed horribly.

"What are you doing here?" he raved. "Get out of my house! I want none of your kind!"

"I beg your pardon," said the senior Sister. "We were visiting the sick, and hearing you were ill, we thought it would cheer you to receive a friendly call. In a long and weary illness a gentleman like you must miss the activity to which he is accustomed, and be pleased to receive an occasional visitor."

The soft tones of the speaker, her refined manner and quiet disregard of the violence of his reception rather shamed the invalid.

"Well, if you don't talk of any cursed religion I shall tolerate you. That is if you are not after money, for I have none to spare. But I warn you if you talk about religion it will take very little provocation to make me send a bullet into you. I keep this (holding

up a revolver) under my pillow to frighten away intruders. I am a sick man, and I won't be irritated."

Showing no sign of fear, and even smiling faintly, the Sister, still standing, replied:

"Oh, we won't talk religion, and we don't want money. We only want to relieve the tedium of a long sickness by some pleasant words and, perhaps, by bringing you something you might like. Sick people, we find, very often relish something that a friend brings more than anything they get at home, no matter how delicious. We have a Sister in our hospital diet kitchen who makes delightful gelatines and jellies. Some day we shall drop in and leave a little for you, if you will accept it."

"If you'll guarantee not to poison me," growled the invalid.

Again the Sister smiled, or rather laughed—a soft, merry laugh. And it must have been contagious, for the sick man's face wore the ghost of a smile.

"But," continued the Sister, "we have intruded too long. You must pardon us. We live at the convent, Forty-ninth street, and if you happen to wish us to call before we come uninvited, just send word. We shall be so glad to come. And now, good-by. I do hope you will soon get better."

And the Sister gave her hand to the sick man, and with a sympathizing smile turned towards the door.

As she turned she faced the sick man's wife, who drew back in surprise.

"We have just had a few pleasant words with Mr.

T——," said the Sister. "We heard he was sick and were so glad to call. You know it is one of our duties to visit the sick."

"Why," faltered the wife, "I did not know any one was here. We don't leave my husband alone often."

"Well," said the Sister, "I am afraid we disturbed him some, but he knows now we had the best motives in coming. And we shall pray for him at home every day, that he may not suffer, but soon recover and be about again. Good-by."

And the Sisters quickly passed out of the house.

"Here is a subject for earnest prayer," agreed the Sisters on their way home. And when they arrived at the convent and told their story earnest and fervent appeals were made in their little chapel that God might take pity on this poor soul.

Sister Esther, who had charge of the visitation of the sick, prayed most of all. She waited day after day, hoping that a spontaneous call would come from the invalid. She felt sure that in his long hours of weariness he would desire some novelty. Why not a visit from the nuns?

She was right.

Mrs. T—— had been a Catholic, but had gradually fallen away from the Church after her marriage. Her husband was a violent hater of all religions, and as for anything Catholic, to mention the word was sufficient to drive him into an insane fury. Indeed, he often flourished his revolver and threatened to shoot and abide by the consequences if religion were men-

tioned. The wife's surprise, therefore, at seeing the nuns almost took her breath away, and she was cautious never to mention the subject again.

Two weeks had elapsed since the Sisters' visit, and Mr. T—— was more irritable than ever. Nothing seemed to please him. One sunny day he sat in his chair at the window and saw two Sisters pass along the street. They didn't as much as glance at the house.

"Just like them," snarled the invalid; "after promising to call again, too! Guess I scared them half to death."

"Call again!" exclaimed the wife, quick to catch the note of desire in his voice. "Do you want them to call, Thomas? I think they would be glad to come; at least that Sister said so."

"Then why don't they?" he snapped. "Talk is cheap."

"Suppose I ask them?" said she.

"Don't you dare!" he shouted. "I don't want them."

"Very well, dear," said his wife, and there was a little sigh back of her voice. She knew his thoughts, and she knew her own, but she did not dare express them.

The next morning Mr. T—— was a little worse than usual and more irritable.

"Marian," he remarked, "those nuns said something about their hospital. I wonder if they have any cases like mine there?"

"Surely, Thomas, you don't mean to go to a hospital?"

"Who said I did? But maybe they know something that might relieve this infernal cough. I have rest neither night nor day, and I wouldn't give a button for the doctor's medicine. It has done me no good."

His wife said nothing. What could she say? She and her little daughter were worn out trying to relieve the poor sufferer, who really was greatly to be pitied, especially during his "bad spells." She sat down near the window. She saw her husband get the telephone book.

"Forty-ninth street," he muttered. "Yes, here it is. Here, Marian, call them up. Say Mr. T—— wants those Sisters who called on him *once* to call again."

The amazed wife mechanically took the book and called up the convent. Promptly came the answer:

"Sister Esther will come down to see you this afternoon."

On hearing this news Mr. T—— quieted down and actually slept a while. After dinner he was alert, evidently waiting for his expected visitors.

Ere long a gentle tap at the door was heard, and Sister Esther and her companion entered and greeted the sufferer as if he were an old friend. Moreover, they brought him a dainty glass of gelatine and assured him he would relish it. Not a word was spoken on the forbidden subject, but half an hour was spent talking on many topics in which the Sisters skilfully found he was interested.

When the Sisters rose to go Mr. T—— expressed regret and actually asked their pardon for his rudeness on the first occasion. "But," said he with rising excitement, "I thought you wanted to talk religion to me, and if you knew all I've had of it in my life, and how I hate the word, you wouldn't blame me."

"Come, now," said Sister Esther, "we won't part with disagreeable topics on our lips."

"Won't you come soon again?" asked Mr. T——. "You don't know how lonely I am. People are afraid of consumptives."

"Yes indeed we will come; perhaps next week."

"Oh, not so far off as that," said he. "Couldn't you come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?" echoed the Sister. "Why, you would get very tired of us at that rate."

"I don't think he would," said his wife. "He has spoken about you several times."

"Well, then, the day after to-morrow." And again Sister Esther held out her hand.

Mr. T—— kept it a moment, and Sister Esther saw one point was scored.

On their return home prayer was renewed. Every one was interested in the sick man's case; every one longed to see this poor soul reconciled with God and restored to grace.

The promised visit was paid and others followed, and Mr. T—— grew restless and irritable if the Sisters were delayed. Finally Sister Esther having secured a foothold, she began to speak of his soul. He changed

color, but did not fly into a rage. She made little impression. Still, on leaving she told him a friend of hers meant, if Mr. T—— had no objection, to call next day, and Mr. T—— must keep him until she arrived.

Mr. T—— would be pleased, he said, to meet any friend of hers, and so they parted.

Next day Father W—— called on Mr. T—— at the hour the Sisters usually came. He was a fearless, athletic man, young and pleasant faced, whose interest had been won by the earnest appeals of Sister Esther. He had been told about the revolver.

Sure enough, as soon as the sick man saw the Roman collar he drew the weapon from his pillow and, pointing it at the priest, shouted: "Get out of my house! You are a Romish priest! Get out or I'll shoot!"

"No, you won't," said Father W——. And, springing towards the bed, he wrested the revolver out of the weak hands. "Don't, Mr. T——," he pleaded. "Don't excite yourself. Be reasonable. I want to be your friend. I am not at all offended by your reception."

Curses, horrible curses, were the only answer, but they exhausted the invalid and he fell back on his pillow. The priest administered a restorative, which the trembling wife provided; and just then the Sisters entered the room.

The patient could not show anger before the quiet concern of Sister Esther. He could only say, in a weak voice:

"So this is your friend!"

"Yes," said Sister Esther, "and I know he will be yours. Get him to talk to you on *athletics*."

The incongruity of the subject, in view of Mr. T——'s exhaustion, due to the encounter just passed, touched the humor of every one present. Father W—— emitted a peal of hearty laughter, which was so contagious that the Sisters joined in it, and even the sick man laughed. The ice was broken and the priest was so agreeable that when he arose to depart the invalid invited him to return.

This was the beginning. Father W—— followed up his advantage, and in a few visits won the confidence of the dying man. One afternoon Mrs. T—— spoke of her husband's hatred for religion and he told the story of his life. His early years were spent in goodness and piety, and he set his heart on becoming a priest. His parents (long since dead) rejoiced at giving their son to God, and he entered the seminary. His studies had led him as far as minor orders, when suddenly a serious skin disease appeared. To his consternation and grief he found that the malady would not yield to remedies. Through some misunderstanding or error he was supposed not to have sought them sufficiently, and he was given to understand that his seminary course must be abandoned. His parents were poor, and he dared not go to them and disappoint them. He was filled with despair and bitterness. He left in anger. The trial was too much for him, and he cursed God! A fellow-student, who pitied him, helped him all he could, recommended him to a physician friend in

a distant city, gave him money and implored of him to get cured and return. But so many efforts had been made to cure him, and had failed, that he had lost all hope.

However, he went to the distant city and was finally cured. With the joy of returning health came the renewed bitterness of disappointment. He obtained a situation and prospered; but he had lost his faith, never spoke of the Church but to curse it, became a Mason, and, as his worldly goods increased, became more and more antagonistic to everything Catholic.

He married a Catholic wife, but she was too weak to hold to her religion, and their little daughter was sent to the public school. Strange to say, the child loved the Catholic Church and longed to go to the Sisters' school, but was never permitted to speak of such a thing. She watched the Sisters, and when her father grew so ill that he was mostly confined to bed, she spoke to them the day our story opened, and thus made the first step towards her parent's salvation. He never knew this, however.

When the long story was ended the priest consoled him, and with kind and manly words poured into his soul a flood of strength and hope in God's mercy. He told him plainly he was near death, and he *must* be saved. He begged him to forget the past bitterness and to return to the Good Shepherd, who had sought him out with such unflagging effort. The dying man listened and finally said:

"I don't know why it is, Father W——, but there

has been all these years an invisible hand that has kept me back from even worse things than I have done and a voice within which seemed to plead with the Lord to spare me till I should make my peace with Him. And I will follow its counsel. Father, I think I will go to Confession! Come to-morrow and I will be ready."

Father W—— was overjoyed. At last the fervent prayers not only of the Sisters, but of his own heart, were answered, for Mr. T—— was an educated man, a fine talker, an engaging companion and his account of his early life had touched the very heart of the priest and emphasized his desire to win the man's soul.

The next day Mr. T—— made his Confession, and peace and content shone on his face. Shortly afterwards he received Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, and then lay patient and resigned, waiting for death.

The Sisters visited him daily, and so did Father W——.

One day a strange priest entered the room.

"You do not know me, *Thomas?*" said he.

The dying man looked at him.

"Can it be—Fred, my old friend of the seminary?"

"The same," said the stranger. "I came to Chicago this morning. I knew you were here. I got the directory and found your name and your home, and I have come to see you. And how do I find you?"

"Oh, my faithful friend!" said the sufferer, brokenly. "The years have worked strange havoc with me. I have gone far from my Father's house. I have been

a prodigal son. But He sought me out and brought me back in His tender arms. I have been lost and am found again."

"Thomas," said the visitor, "you were hardly dealt with when we were students together; but you have come to your own. They acknowledged to me that they might have been more considerate, but it was all for the best. Thousands of prayers and Masses have been offered for you. I have never passed a day without mentioning your name in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

"Oh, my more than brother!" said Mr. T——. "I felt it. I *knew* some one was fighting for me before God, and it was you! To you I owe my salvation. Wait with me for the end."

Only a few days passed. One calm evening as the sun went down and the soft summer breeze parted the curtains of that chamber they knelt around his bed. Two priests were there and the weeping wife and child. His friend of the long ago, who had knelt beside him in the seminary chapel, wiped the death dew from his clammy brow and raised his anointed hand in absolution as the solemn and sacred prayer of the Church fell on his failing senses:

"Depart, Christian soul, in the Name of God the Father, who created thee——"

One long, shivering sigh and the ransomed spirit fled from the suffering body, redeemed, saved, through God's infinite love and a spiritual brother's faithful prayers.

Oh! the length and breadth of the mercy of God, that gathered to the Sacred Heart this worn and weary spirit, this much tried being, this precious human soul. Surely "if there shall be joy in heaven over the conversion of a sinner," there were glad rejoicings on that day.

The wife and child were soon restored to Holy Church, and the Sisters in the convent as they knelt before the altar in their beautiful, silent chapel offered their grateful prayers and thanksgivings.

The Fruit of a Single Mass

Some years ago, in the hill country of Western Pennsylvania, two wealthy farmers—brothers—owned their broad acres side by side. They were of the sturdy stuff of which pioneers are made—men of intelligence, shrewdness, fine moral training and physical strength. They loved nature and higher things, were God-fearing, and had a thirst for books hard to satisfy in the remote mountains where their lifework held them.

Respected by all, they reared large families, and our story deals with one son, who was the favorite of his father and the godson of his uncle. He grew up the very life of both families, and perhaps somewhat spoiled, for when he was still in his teens he insisted on leaving the happy, wholesome life of the farm and his comfortable home and going West to seek a great fortune. Affectionate remonstrance was of no avail, and at last he departed for the great West, amid the prayers and tears of those who loved him.

At first accounts came at regular intervals. He was faithful to his religion, the same devoted Catholic, the same affectionate son and brother. But as years rolled by less was heard of the absent one, and finally news came not at all.

Decades of years rolled by and changes came to the old homestead. One by one the children passed out of

it, and to the boy's father reverses came and the old home went out of his possession. The boy was now a middle-aged man and was fast verging on the period when he should rest and enjoy the remainder of his years.

He had made an ample fortune in the lead mines, but at the expense of his health. Soon it was rumored the wanderer was coming home to die, and the remaining kinsfolk and neighbors found their hearts stirred to welcome him. He had bought back the old homestead and meant to make his aged father happy; and the pathetic fact that he was returning broken in health, but full of love for "the old place," gave an added strength to the feelings awakened.

And he came back, and with him his Western wife. She was a large, brusque woman, not attractive to the warm-hearted mountain people, but she was made welcome. They had no children, and it was found that she was a bitter Protestant, and that her husband had lost his faith. At first this fact was mourned in silence and shocked surprise. Excuses were found in the ill health that was only too apparent; but when long months went by and neither husband nor wife ever appeared at church, some of the kindred ventured on gentle remonstrance, which was received with angry resentment. The aged father had given up persuasion and advice long before, and finally when the good pastor of the parish had called and had been rudely rebuffed, the old friends and relations shook their heads and mourned that one so near the grave should

realize so little the awful account demanded by God for a wasted life. Time rolled on, and the unfortunate man was scarcely able to appear on the streets of his native town without danger of collapse, but he still ventured forth, bargained with his neighbors for produce or stock and seemed oblivious of his fast failing condition. His resentment when religion was mentioned was so bitter and profane that at last his nearest relatives shunned the house.

His uncle and godfather, however, would not allow his insulted feelings to get the better of his interest and charity, and continued to visit him. The aged father of the obstinate sinner met his death one day by falling from a wagon, but had time to receive the sacraments and depart from this life in holy peace. His son was not at the death-bed, nor, to the indignation of the parish, did he go to the church for the funeral Mass.

But it was noticed after this he seemed to grow more feeble, and was not so often seen in the street. Finally he did not appear at all, and rumor said he had become worse and was confined to bed. To all who paid him a short visit and did not speak of religion he was civil and even pleasant, and his wife was the same. She seemed to have a weary look to those who noticed her, but she never made complaint. One day the godfather and uncle of this man visited him, and seeing from his appearance he surely had not long to live, and fearing to throw him into a paroxysm of rage by mentioning his soul, left the house, full of sadness. Meet-

ing his own pious wife, he voiced the sorrow that filled him.

"Let us have a Holy Mass offered for him," said she, "and both of us will attend and pray for him!"

"That is a good idea," said her husband. "I will go at once and speak to the priest."

He started off to the rectory and in about an hour returned home much comforted. He told the pastor his trouble and the priest promised to say Mass next morning for his nephew.

Bright and early at the church, the two charitable Christians attended next day, and with great fervor assisted at the Sacrifice of the Altar, which was offered for this poor, impenitent, dying relative.

Some hours passed away and both resumed the daily duties of life, when they saw from the window the wife of the wanderer coming to the house. It alarmed them, but she only said:

"Michael wants to see his uncle, and asked me to call for him."

"Is he worse?"

"Oh, no; if anything he is better!"

"I will go," said Mr. K——, and he started at once, but with some misgivings as to his reception.

On entering the invalid's room the sick man stretched out his hands and said with a smile: "Uncle, I want you to do me a favor."

"What is it, Michael?"

"Would it be too much trouble for you to get me the priest?"

"Trouble!" exclaimed his uncle. "No, indeed! I will go for him myself."

"I thought so," said his nephew; "that is the reason I sent for you in preference to anybody else. Besides I feel so well to-day!"

"Thank God!" said Mr. K——. "I will go at once, Michael."

He did not trust himself to say another word, but left the house without speaking to either the invalid's wife or his own, who was standing in the doorway of his house as he passed. Ere long the good pastor, who was rejoiced at the news, stood at the bedside of the sinner who had resisted every grace, apparently, and seemed to have no thought about dying in his sins.

"Father," said the man, "I am thankful you came to me. *I was at your Mass this morning,* and felt its graces pour into my soul, leaving me humble and repentant and longing to make my peace with God!"

"You were at my Mass?" said the astonished priest. "I didn't know you were even aware I offered Mass for you!"

"Nor was I," said the invalid, "but I saw you plainly at the altar, and the grace of the Holy Sacrifice has so worked in my heart that I am ready to make my confession of forty years."

Needless to say, the priest blessed God secretly, and in amazed delight at this unspeakable favor of heaven, heard the poor man's confession.

He was long in the room, and after it was over he called the invalid's wife and told her how God had

given her husband this wonderful grace; and the invalid himself expressed such joy and gratitude that tears ran down her cheeks.

As he seemed so bright and well the priest promised to return next day with the Blessed Sacrament, but the invalid said: "No, Father, do not delay; I may seem better, but I want to receive Holy Viaticum; death is not far off!"

The priest yielded to his desire, and went for the Blessed Sacrament and the holy oils.

The fact that the priest had visited this hardened sinner soon spread through the little village, and he was met by many good people, whose inquiries he answered with a glad acquiescence that he had made his peace with God.

When he returned with the Blessed Sacrament a reverent crowd followed and assisted in an ante room, while Michael received Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, tears of contrition rolling down his cheeks.

When all was done, sympathetic neighbors pressed around him to congratulate him. Verily it was like the feast for the prodigal son! He begged pardon for the scandal he had given in his native place, protesting that his faith had never died, but was only dormant, having been crusted over by his free life in the West. He declared he had seen his pastor in the old church, from which he had been absent for so many years, saying Mass for him. He described the color of the vestments, and again averred that the graces that flowed from the Holy Sacrifice were like an irresistible torrent

that broke down all before it. He wanted to know how it was that the Mass was for him. His uncle stepped forward.

"Michael, I had the Mass offered for you, and your aunt and myself were there and prayed for your conversion."

"Then, uncle, to you I owe the means of my salvation. That single Mass won my soul from perdition!"

In the middle of that night he died, suddenly and painlessly. His wife, who was watching by his bed, only heard a long-drawn sigh and found that the end had come.

Such was the wonderful conversion wrought by a single Mass! Nor was that all. His wife asked to be instructed and baptized, and is to-day a fervent convert.

The Apostolate of a Little Maid

When I first became acquainted with Maggie she was a red-haired, good-humored girl of nineteen. Her face was full of freckles and her eyes were bright blue, and the wildest stretch of affection could never call her beautiful.

But Maggie's heart beat with kindness and charity, which made one forget all about her want of beauty. Her hands were ever ready to do service to others, and, taking her all in all, she was as cheery and wholesome a little servant as could be found in all New York.

Her early life had not been an easy one. Her childhood had been marred by the crushing poverty of Ireland, her girlhood oppressed with the knowledge that things were growing worse instead of better. Her resolution to seek a new country, of which such golden tales were told by other girls who had gone before, though seeming the dawn of a millennium of comfort and affluence, brought the bitterest sorrow of her life—parting with home and family. So that, despite the brave heart that turned so courageously to battle with an unknown future, it was two very tear-stained eyes that watched (as she told me) the shores of old Ireland fading from view. No one was there to notice the pathetic droop of the curly red head, so Maggie cried "the heart out of her" for a day or two, and then gathered herself together, and her smile and

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cheery voice were the most prominent memories which visitors to the steerage quarters carried away with them.

There was one tall, beautiful, weary-faced girl who saw the little Irish maid feeding a baby whose mother was ill, and after this delicately-reared girl went back to her own luxurious stateroom she could not get Maggie's face out of her mind. (All this was told to me long after.)

"Why, she looked absolutely happy!" said the tall girl, with a sort of irritation at the perverse sunshine, which seemed to shed its brightness so plentifully over the poor Irish girl's life, while she could not coax one single ray to touch her own surroundings into brightness.

When the vessel landed Maggie was met by two older companions, who had made the venture a year or so before. Their homes had been near "her part" in the old country, and their letters were largely responsible for her coming across.

They gave her a rapturous welcome and took her to a safe home, and then, with the warm-heartedness of their race, got her a place as maid-of-all-work with a little widow in Brooklyn.

It was not always light work, either, but, light or heavy, Maggie's smile and good humor sweetened it, and these became so pleasing to the widow and family that her newness to the ways of American housekeeping was overlooked. She was taught and trained,

until she developed into as deft and capable a little maid as the most captious mistress could desire.

Of course, she made some acquaintances among the neighbors, and one of the first results of this was her joining the Sodality of the Children of Mary in the parish church, under the direction of a nun from the convent at the corner; and here it was I made Maggie's acquaintance. A retreat was given to the Sodality, and the evening sermon was devoted to the working girls. I don't know how it was, but somehow one evening these words came to my lips:

"Each of us has some special mission to perform in this world. The mission of a priest or a nun is easy to see, but there are other hidden missions in some lives—work to do—not recognized by the world, but which make one's life perfect and pleasing in our Lord's eyes. Some girls think that their lives are commonplace and tiresome; they long for great things to do, when all the time they may be passing by some little work sent to them specially by our Lord Himself. We should be watchful for opportunities to do good to every one whose life touches ours. Think how happy we will be at the hour of death if we know we have never left even the smallest mission unfulfilled. This happiness, remember, is possible for each one, as there is no life devoid of missions sent us with a special purpose and meaning in each."

That week I had a talk with Maggie. I found out the hidden treasures of virtue in the girl, and we became fast friends. She often visited me after the

retreat, and always referred to the evening I spoke of the special mission of each one as a great enlightenment to her life. One day she came rather early, after Mass of a summer morning.

"Well, Maggie," I said, "what is it?"

"I want to say good-by, your reverence."

"Good-by! Why, surely, Maggie, you are not going to leave us?"

"Yes, your reverence; but only for the summer season. Mary and Katie (they're my friends, Father; came from the same place at home) have got places as chambermaids in a hotel down at the seashore, and they be thinkin' I need a change, and so they got me in, too. But, Father, it's just for the summer. I'm comin' back in October, and the missus she says she wants me back again then."

"Well, good-by, Maggie. Be a good girl. Do not miss Mass, and go to the sacraments regularly. Pray for me, and don't forget to look out for your mission."

"I do be thinkin', Father, my mission is to sweep and dust. I never can think of anything else for me."

"Well," said I, "that is a very good mission in itself. Maybe God wants you to help keep this old earth clean. See that you do it well. Don't leave dust in the corners, and some day you may find another little mission or two clinging to your broom or hidden in your duster."

Maggie went to the seashore and was assigned, with her friends, the task of caring for the rooms of a certain corridor lined by handsome apartments, occu-

pied for the most part by the girl butterflies whose wings flutter so busily and brightly during the summer-time. These rooms were filled with daintiness and frippery, shining silver articles scattered over the toilet tables and the thousand and one things that belong to the paraphernalia of the modern girl.

There was one room, Maggie told me afterwards, where she delighted to dust and to linger. On the dressing table was a gilded frame containing an oval ivory miniature of the Madonna. The beautiful, sorrowful face was painted with rare delicacy, every detail of form and color was brought out, the whole thrilling the gazer with the mingling of human and divine which is the result of prayer and inspiration in an artist.

At this picture Maggie never tired of gazing. The room seemed to gain a sort of sanctity from its mere presence, and when she dusted the articles on the dressing table her hands touched the picture with reverence and her lips formed a prayer.

One morning she was standing gazing at the picture, her duster tucked under her arm, her hands clasped, when the owner of the room, who happened to be the same tall, weary-looking girl who noticed Maggie with interest in the steamer which brought both across the sea, entered suddenly. Her memory brought back the pang of envy which she had felt at the first sight of the blithesome little maid in the steerage. She looked at her with unusual interest. Maggie was too much absorbed to hear the light footfall, and it was not until the girl spoke that she started and, blushing

up to the roots of her ruddy hair, stopped her praying.

"It's so beautiful, miss," she said apologetically, hastily resuming her dusting, "that I couldn't help looking at it!"

"It is beautiful," assented the other girl, looking curiously at Maggie. "You may look at it whenever you wish. That is what beautiful things are for, to give pleasure to every one. This was painted by a great artist in Rome, and I think it the most beautiful face I ever saw. It is only a dream, however. No human face could ever be so lovely."

"The dear, blessed Mother of God must have been that beautiful, even more so," said Maggie, shyly, yet with direct simplicity.

"Surely you don't believe such a woman ever lived?" said Edith abruptly, with one of the impulses which made her forget position, education, habit, everything save the desire to argue with this creature who held a belief she could not share.

The astonishment and dismay in the wide-open blue eyes which Maggie turned on her gave her a curious thrill, half amusement, half pain.

"Not to believe——" Maggie was too horrified to finish the sentence. "Our dear, blessed Mother! O, miss, surely you know about her?"

Poor Maggie! In all her life she had never been in contact with unbelief, and this coming face to face with an open doubt of the very existence of the dear, blessed Mother was a shock.

Edith laughed, but she was impressed in spite of

"Our dear Blessed Mother! Oh, miss, surely you know about her?"—*Page 104.*

herself by this evidence of absolute faith in what she had never considered more than a poetic myth. Born of a father who was an avowed unbeliever, deprived of her mother before she could well utter her name, she had been reared in a fashionable atmosphere of conviction that religion was but a sentimental creation of saints and angels. She had been her father's constant companion, mingling but little with other girls; and in the society that always gathered about the brilliant physician she blossomed into a radiant womanhood without one stone of foundation on which to rear the structure of faith and religion.

Edith had visited the cathedrals of the Old World. She had knelt under the gentle benediction of the Holy Father; she had answered the silver chimes of many a church abroad and assisted at sacred pageants, but had looked on with the eye of an artist, and sometimes smiled a little cynically. It was to her love of beauty she attributed the tightening of her heart strings when she witnessed a ceremonial benediction at St. Peter's. Once, when she was in Florence, she had stolen into one of the lofty churches there. The dim light, with the shafts of amethyst and gold staining the marble floor, the sanctuary lamp hanging in midair like a jewel alive, stilled her heart for a moment as she knelt, and then she ran away, frightened. In the bright sunshine outside, filled with the glow of Italian color, she laughed at herself and thought she was growing emotional. But the memory had never left her, and something of these thoughts and incidents flashed through

her mind as she looked at Maggie. There had always seemed a sort of reverence about the little Madonna, too, and she felt a kind of envious pain at Maggie's amazement that any one should be so truly unhappy as not to know the blessed Mother.

The feeling clung to her all day until her friends rallied her, and that night as she sat at her window and watched the stars sparkling over the sea, they seemed to have a pity in their gaze as they looked down on her. The idea grew on her until a rush of tears dimmed her eyes and she laid her head on her pillow with a half-defined wish to know more of what Maggie knew.

The next morning she lingered in her room, making one excuse after another to herself, until Maggie came in, duster in hand, for her daily task. She smiled and courtsied at Edith's greeting, and at her request went about her work, blushing to know that the stormy dark eyes which she thought so beautiful were following her as she went about. When she reached the Madonna Edith saw her lips move as she touched it tenderly, and she said gently:

"You handle that picture almost as if it were alive."

"I couldn't be rough with it, miss," was Maggie's answer, and she glanced under her lashes to see if the proud face had the amused scorn it wore the day before. But no, it was grave, and even a little sad, and the sadness melted Maggie's quick heart and stirred her sympathy.

"Pray to her, miss. She's God's blessed Mother.

She holds the Heart of her blessed Son in her hands, and He can't refuse anything she asks."

"Pray, child!" said Edith. "I? Why, I never prayed in my life. I do not know what the word means. How should I pray?"

And then Maggie forgot she was a poor little servant; she only thought of the depths of the stormy heart thus laid bare, starving for faith and love. She laid her red hand, hardened by toil, on the soft white one of Edith and said with sweet solemnity:

"Say, 'Mother of Christ, pray for me!' and you'll get the grace of praying and believing, for she never lets a prayer go by unheeded."

And then Maggie took up her duster and went quickly from the room, leaving Edith gazing at the picture, while the little aspiration rang through her heart like a deep-toned bell—only for a moment, however, for she dashed the tears from her eyes angrily.

"What am I thinking of to let the aroma of an old superstition enthral me? Edith, you are a fool to let your emotions run away with you so!"

And when Maggie came back later to finish her work she found the Madonna lying face downward on the table.

That night when Maggie's duties were finished she slipped away to the church, and kneeling in the dim light she looked straight up at the white figure of the Immaculate Conception and recited her rosary for the strange dark-eyed girl whose heart seemed to be so unhappy, and who did not know how to pray.

"Mother of Christ, pray for her," whispered Maggie.

Little did she know that at that moment Edith was kneeling at her window with the Madonna clasped tightly in her hands, murmuring over and over again: "Mother of Christ, pray for me! Mother of Christ, pray for me!"

Each morning it was the same. Edith lingered to ask questions, and Maggie, whose direct answers, clear and conclusive, with the simplicity of perfect faith, carried conviction to the heart trembling between doubt and desire. Maggie never hesitated; she never wavered. To her the unhappiness of not knowing the blessed Mother seemed so vast that her whole endeavor was turned to a prayer that Edith might learn. For wasn't the Blessed Virgin close to God in heaven, her Divine Son?

All Edith's half-cynical arguments against the unreason of blind faith were met with the indestructible weapons which that faith puts into the hands of its weakest soldier. Maggie's untaught language had about it a rude, picturesque beauty, especially when she grew interested and forgot her shyness. And as she spoke she made the great truths of faith doubly dear to her listener.

And as every morning found Maggie answering Edith's questions about religion, so every evening found her kneeling before the altar in the little seaside church praying with all the strength and fervor of her simple heart for the gift of faith to this other heart blindly groping in the dark.

And so the summer days dawned and died. Edith's friends wondered at her pre-occupation, and Maggie's companions accused her of being in love until they found out about the daily visits to the church, and then they said she was cultivating a vocation to be a nun.

The culmination came on the evening of the 15th of August. As Edith knelt at the window, while Maggie was going to confession in the church, intending to offer her Communion next day for her beautiful friend, something seemed to float through the starlight down upon her. "Mother of Christ, pray for me!" she murmured. And suddenly the tightness about her heart loosened, the darkness became light, and, laying the dear picture against her cheek, she burst into tears.

"Oh, I know! I know!" she cried to herself. "She has prayed for me. Dear Mother of Christ, I believe in His one true faith!"

And in peace with her tired soul she laid her head on her pillow.

The next morning, as Maggie passed Edith's door, going to early Mass, she heard her name called, and a moment later she was gazing into the radiant face of Edith, who laid her hands on the little servant's shoulders, whispering: "Maggie, Maggie! Pray for me at Mass. I am going to be a Catholic. The Mother of Christ has indeed prayed for me."

That was only the beginning. The end was when Edith was baptized on the 21st of November, feast of the Presentation, and Maggie, more smiling and

blushing than ever, was her godmother. When we went into the sacristy I said:

"So you found your mission hidden in your duster, after all, Maggie?"

"Ah, your reverence," said Maggie, "I forgot about my mission. I was too busy with my work and telling Miss Edith about our Lord and His blessed Mother."

And then I thought, as I looked at the humble, ruddy head: "She has done the Master's work in the guise of common things. Blessed be God in His saints. She is a true apostle!"

A Happy Find

We had gathered together our little mission band, three in number, determined to lay violent siege to a rather bigoted town, New B——, in Pennsylvania. We were filled with zeal, determined to win sheaves of souls for the great Master, when, lo! our leader, "the noblest Roman of them all," a host in himself, was seized with illness, and was obliged to remain in bed. What a trial this was, both to himself and us, can hardly be described. The Almighty needs not our weak instrumentality to fulfill His ends, but only makes use of us as He sees fit.

The mission was opened. One evening I was sent for by the City Hospital to see a poor Italian who had asked for the priest. I went at once. On arriving at the hospital a courteous nurse, seeing I was a priest, conducted me to the bed. I found the Italian more frightened than ill. In fact, there was no need of his sending for a priest at all. He had only a cold, and would soon be about again. I said a few kind words, however, and left. On my way out I went to various other beds, and finally reached one where a young man, about twenty-one, with a boyish face, lay very ill indeed. I bent over him and whispered: "Are you a Catholic?" He opened his eyes and shook his head no.

"Well," I said, taking his hand, "I hope you will

have a restful night, my son, but you are very sick indeed."

He turned his head quickly.

"Are you a Catholic Father?" said he.

"Yes; I am a priest."

"I am so glad," said he, "because if I am going to die I want to die a Catholic."

"Why do you want to die a Catholic?" I said.

"Because I think only Catholics have the right religion."

"What makes you think that, my son?"

"Well, Father, the only boys I ever ran with were Catholics, and the only services I ever attended were at night, after work, when I accompanied my Catholic chums, and they were all right. I never had a chance to know any religion. When my father married a second time he sent all of us out to earn our own living, and I had been doing telephone work until I got sick. But I heard the boys say that to go to heaven you had to be baptized in the Catholic Church, and, Father, I want to be baptized."

Here was a soul almost thrust into my hands. I silently thanked God.

"Were you ever baptized before, my son?"

"No, Father."

"Can you bless yourself?"

"If you tell me how, Father."

His humble simplicity touched me. I showed him how to bless himself and gave him the fundamental principles of faith and some little aspirations to say,

and, as my time was up, I told him I would be back in the early morning and would baptize him and give him the other sacraments. He thanked me warmly.

I hurried to the church, went through the usual work, and fervently prayed for that soul thus rescued by the goodness of God. Next morning I took the Blessed Sacrament and the holy oils and hastened to the hospital. My patient was weaker, but his face glowed with delight when he saw me. I asked him to bless himself, which he did fervently; and he repeated the little aspirations, telling me he had done so all night long. Ill as he was, he remembered all I had told him. Then I prepared to baptize him. Just as I was getting everything ready on a little table beside the bed, he whispered:

"Father, I want to tell you something. I was baptized once, long ago."

"What!" I exclaimed. "You didn't tell me that! Who baptized you?"

"Well, Father, I forgot. Why, I baptized myself. I heard the boys say you could not see the face of God unless you were baptized, so I got the words you say and a tomato can full of water, and I went off into a field where no one saw me and I poured on the water and baptized myself. I thought I ought to tell you when I thought of it."

Of course, it was no baptism, but the very simplicity of it went to my heart, and I reassured him by telling him that he was still unbaptized and I would now truly baptize him. I did so, and when I finished I told him

about Extreme Unction and the Holy Eucharist. He assented to everything, and when I tried to explain, as well as the short time allowed, the great graces bestowed by these two sacraments, he said:

"I'm trying to understand it all, Father, and I believe everything the Catholic Church teaches."

Nothing more was needed, so I anointed him, and he made his First Communion, and an expression of ineffable peace was on his face as I said good-by. I never saw him alive again. He died tranquilly that day. When I came back to the house and repeated the story to my fellow-missionary in his sick bed, he raised his hands to heaven and said fervently:

"Thank God for our glorious mission!"

But the mission proceeded prosperously. Our leader was there at its close, and if the call to the Italian's bed was useless, another soul was caught up from this valley of tears to the clear vision of Paradise. One soul, yet worthy of the precious blood of the Son of God!

The Power of the Blessed Sacrament

"I HAVE HAD many experiences in my long life, Father, but I never think of this one without sudden tears."

The speaker was a venerable Sister of Mercy, and we had been talking of the non-Catholic missions and of the wonderful ways by which God brought souls to a knowledge of His faith and love. I need not say I pressed the good Sister to continue.

"It was many years ago, Father, in the young days of the *second* St. Paul's Cathedral, in Pittsburg, Pa. (You may not know the present great cathedral there is the third of that name.) It was, too, in the days of the first Bishop, Right Rev. Michael O'Connor, who became a Jesuit and died a saint. His brother, Dr. James O'Connor, afterwards Bishop of Omaha, Neb., resided at the cathedral, and was a warm friend and benefactor of our hospital at the time I mention.

"Few and far between were the theatrical or operatic performances of that day. But suddenly the city was filled with posters, announcing in glaring letters a fine company was about to give a week's performance in the best opera house.

"The company was of the highest moral standing. The plays were classic, and everybody was going to be present.

"In the middle of the week, when the whole town

was in delight and almost wild over the 'star,' it was announced she was seriously ill, and her understudy would fill her parts for the rest of the time.

"It was too true. One night, after a performance at which the house was in frantic enthusiasm, the best physician of the city was roused up and hurriedly driven to the principal hotel, which was right on the Monongahela River. He was led at once to the lady's room, and found her in high fever.

" 'Overstrained nerves, excitement and fatigue,' was the verdict. 'Her life depends upon perfect quiet.'

"The manager was in despair. He knew the people wanted *her,* and visions of a disastrous finale to a season that began so prosperously distressed his soul. There was no help for it, and Dr. Bruce, who was on our staff, suggested a removal to our hospital, where quiet and the best nursing and care could be found.

"Already the hotel people were complaining that their house would be depopulated if the truth got out. So the ambulance was sent at night, when the streets were silent, and the unconscious actress was brought to our care. The best room was demanded and given, and for days the members of the company came, although they could not see her. All expressed deep concern, and all demanded and gave generously for her comfort everything money could buy.

"When the week was up and the company had departed, she still lay there, sick unto death.

"The manager gave addresses and an ample check,

and arranged we should keep him informed daily of her condition, which we faithfully did.

"The hospital became for a time quite a point of interest on account of this celebrated woman, who lay so long between life and death, but by degrees the 'nine days' wonder' cooled down, and only the doctor and the Sisters continued their interest.

"Dr. James O'Connor, who frequently visited the hospital, however, often inquired for the poor invalid, and as soon as was possible paid her a visit. Her room was constantly filled with beautiful flowers, sent by admirers of her talent.

"She was worthy of all the attention she received. I never saw a more beautiful woman, nor one more cultured, or intelligent, or sweet. She was about twenty-eight, unmarried and in the full maturity of majestic womanhood.

"Tall, graceful, with perfectly chiseled features, a wealth of rich brown hair and very dark blue eyes, that often changed to gray, she had a smile that was sweet even in her sufferings. She had beautiful slender hands, which her art had made full of language. In her convalescence, when the fever had caused her to lose her hair, and her head was covered with a crop of lovely, short curls, she was the most winsome personality I ever met.

"As she grew better she became interested in things around her. She had many questions to ask, and for the first time realized she was in a Catholic hospital. I was with her every day, and she told me she was a

'High Church Episcopalian,' and always said her prayers and, whenever her engagements permitted, went to church. I mentioned some ministers I knew and offered to send for any one she wished, but she said 'no' so sincerely that I did not press the subject.

"We had many talks about religious matters, and especially about the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. She told me she always 'believed it possible,' and longed to go to Mass. She begged me to take her just once to the chapel for Mass, and I promised she should go the following Sunday.

"You are not surprised I became deeply interested in her, and had many prayers offered for her. As it neared Sunday she grew so excited and anxious that I was about to retract my promise, but when I said so the tears came and she pleaded so earnestly that I could not resist her.

"She was taken to the chapel Sunday morning in a rolling chair, and was placed beside my *prie-dieu.*

"All during Mass I prayed for her with my whole soul. She never moved. Her white, slender fingers were clasped loosely in her lap, and she never stirred her hands. We all went to the rail to Holy Communion, and when I returned to my place and bowed my head in thanksgiving I felt her trembling and heard her softly sobbing. I motioned to an attendant to take her to her room, but she shook her head and would not go until after Mass.

"Shortly after breakfast she sent for me, and I found her brilliant with happiness and in an ecstasy of joy.

"'Oh, Sister!' she cried, 'I longed so to go to our Saviour all during that Mass. My heart cried to Him because I could not go, but when you came back from receiving Communion I felt He had come to me. I *knew* He was with you, and I worshiped Him because He was so close to me. I *felt* His presence.'

"The ring of her voice is with me yet. I did not attempt to repress my tears, and when she begged me to instruct her, and declared there was nothing to satisfy her soul but the Church *where Christ Himself* remained, my joy was complete.

"Dr. James O'Connor instructed and baptized her, and she made her First Communion in the hospital chapel.

"Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was intense, and as she grew stronger she remained for hours before the altar, 'loving and talking to our Lord.'

"She had a married sister in New York, but she did not wish her to be informed of her condition at first. Now she wrote to her and asked her to come and visit her. She did so. She was a tall, handsome woman, a little older than the actress, but extremely bigoted. Her manner was perfectly courteous, but very frigid. We gave her every attention, offered her a room near her sister, and ere long her coldness wore off. Her sister could not keep to herself her new-found happiness, and they had many talks together, I myself joining in their later ones at their request. Dr. O'Connor, whose gracious manners were very attractive, was also present on numerous occasions. All of them had

traveled abroad extensively, and their conversation, beginning on something they had seen in Europe, generally ended on religious subjects. Finally he invited both ladies to take a drive and visit the cathedral, a handsome Gothic structure, the pride of the city. The carriage came, they went to several places, and finally the great, solemn basilica was shown to them. The sanctuary lamp, ever burning, and the *confessionals* greatly impressed the ladies, and when these latter were thrown open and the Protestant lady invited to examine them, the Doctor unconsciously overturned her last prejudice. On their return to the hospital the married lady told me she had always had a horror of confessionals, and could not reconcile the idea of a sacrament being connected with the stories she had heard of priests and penitents. From that day she began to read books of instruction, and before her return to New York asked to be baptized, and was received into the Church. Both ladies left the hospital with grateful tears in their eyes and a warm love for the Sisters.

"I have had many letters from them since. The actress never went back to the stage, but married a good Catholic gentleman. Her sister was the instrument of her husband's conversion, and their children's also. All led most beautiful Christian lives. I have not heard from Aimee, my first protege, for a long time; perhaps she has gone to heaven. If so, she is surely singing praises to the most holy sacrament of the altar, by whose power she was led to the true faith

and the love of our Lord. May His name be blessed forever."

"Amen," I echoed as my good religious friend closed her narrative. "All praise be given to the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament of the Eucharist, the true magnet of souls."

His Mother's Beads

I HAD BEEN all evening in the confessional. At a quarter to twelve I was mounting the stairs that led to my room, when the night bell rang. I went to the door.

"Who is there?" I asked.

"A man who must see the priest."

"But this is no time to see the priest. Is any one sick?"

"Yes, Father," was the answer in a sad voice. "I am worse than sick."

I opened the door and faced the speaker, a man in poor attire.

"Father," he said, "do you want to save a soul?"

Then he entered, though I had not invited him to do so. Ordinarilly such a proceeding would put me on my guard. I felt no fear this time, and under the dim light of the hall lamp I scrutinized the intruder. He took off his cap and I saw a white, haggard face, unkempt hair, a ragged coat and grimy hands. The eyes were clear and earnest, and I waited to hear what should come next.

"Father, I am a burglar and belong to an organized band. Don't be afraid"—for I started back involuntarily. "I was once a good Catholic, but I have not practiced my religion for years. This very night I held up a laboring man whom I knew had received his

pay. I grabbed his throat and took from his pocket a roll of bills. Entangled with them was a rosary. When I saw the beads I felt a shiver run through me. My mother's face came before me. Like a flash I thrust the money back into the man's hand and said: 'You take that; I will keep this,' and before he could make an outcry I fled down an alley to a shelter and sat down, looking at the rosary.

"I saw our little house in the country and my old mother (God rest her!) sitting in her chair on the porch with her beads in her lap. The sun was shining and the creatures on the farm were making their pleasant noises; but mother was looking at me. I called out, 'Do you want anything, mother?' 'No, son, only that you be a good man. I am saying my beads for you.' Father, I heard her voice as plainly as I hear my own, and it broke me all up. I resolved to become an honest man and see a priest this very night. I had little hope of finding one at this late hour, and I think God had mercy on me when He sent you to me."

"My son," I said, "do you want to go to confession?"

"That's what brought me here, Father."

I drew him into a little room where there was always a stole and a craté, and he got on his knees and made his confession.

It was a strange scene. The darkened room, only the hall lamp dimly burning outside; the silent house and the solemn tolling of midnight which rang out

over the city. But God's work was accomplished, and when we stood again at the door he said:

"Father, you can trust me. I have not a cent in the world. I will return what you will lend me next Saturday."

I put my hand in my pocket. There was nothing but a two-dollar bill.

"I am sorry I have nothing more," I said.

"It will do, Father. I will try to get work, and this will give me lodging and meals till I do. I will be here next Saturday. Good-night."

"God bless you, my son," I said. "Good-night." And I closed the door.

It was long before I slept. The face of the poor man was before me, and the little white rosary and the vivid picture of that old mother in her chair on the porch seemed to follow me even as I dreamed.

"Will he come back?" I asked myself, and then dismissed the doubt as unworthy. All week I wondered if he would come. I knew he would some time, but feared it might not be so soon.

Saturday came. In the evening as I came down from my study for supper a respectable looking man rose from a chair in the hall, where he had been waiting, and approached me.

"Father," he said, "I came to return your two dollars. I have found work."

I did not recognize him until he spoke, and then I grasped his hand.

"I am so glad to see you," I said. "I knew you

would come some time, but I was afraid not so soon."

"I meant to keep my word, Father," he said. "When I made the first break and came to you I knew God would do the rest, and so He did. I thank Him for it—Him and my good old mother."

"You will come again?" I asked.

"Yes, Father; I'll come next Saturday."

And leaving me at the front door, he went out with a brisk step and disappeared down the street. As I looked at the two-dollar bill I said to myself: "Oh, ye sainted old mothers who pray for your wandering sons, never give up. God cannot deny your prayers. They will come back, and there shall be joy in heaven over the sinner who returns, over the sheep that was lost and is found through your loving prayers."

Need I say that he came back the following Saturday and has come regularly since, leading the life of a good and honest man?

The Newsboy Martyr

THE WORLD is full of unwritten heroism, and once in a while we find ourselves face to face with a life that makes our own seem small and unworthy. Such is the one I am going to tell you about; and remember, I tell only tales that are true!

The First Communion classes for working boys were being formed, one evening, in the schoolhouse of my parish. I was watching the lads as they were placed in divisions according to their intelligence, when, suddenly, a scuffle was heard at the door.

Every head was turned, as a boy was pushed forward. He fell, but quickly regained his feet, and tried to make his exit, but two other boys were behind him, barring the way. He stood at bay like a small wild animal, his terrified eyes taking in the windows, vainly trying to see if escape were possible.

"What does this mean?" I said sternly.

"Father, this feller has been hangin' round the buildin' for an hour! He wants in, but he's 'fraid!"

"What are you afraid of, my son?"

No answer came from the boy, who certainly looked frightened to death. He was ill-clad, small and pale.

"What is your name? Don't be afraid! Speak up like a man!"

"Will," in a husky voice, twirling his cap.

"Will what?"

"Father, he ain't got any other name. He hasn't got any parents, nor brothers, nor nothin'," said the boys, who seemed to know him.

One of life's waifs, I thought, thrown on the stream of humanity, wanted by nobody, cared for by nobody, and yet a soul for whom Christ died.

"Will, are you a Catholic?"

"Yes, Father."

"Do you want to make your First Communion?"

He looked up eagerly.

"Yes, Father."

"Well, come here and sit down, and I'll teach you all you have to know."

Will looked furtively around, and seeing I smiled, and yet was in earnest, took the seat I gave him, and his presence was soon forgotten. He looked and listened in silence all evening.

I thought it better to say nothing to him that evening. If he came again it would be time enough. When the other boys left I found out from one who lingered that Will was a newsboy, lived under steps in summer and in ash-pits in winter; always said he was a Catholic, but until now never came near a Catholic school, and he was twelve years old! He had heard other boys talk about night instructions, and came with the crowd, but lacked courage to enter until forcibly landed in the room by his chums, who would have "no foolin' where the priest was."

Next evening Will was on hand. Face clean, better

clothes, though sadly threadbare and respectful and attentive. He could not read, so instructions proceeded laboriously. However, he grew more and more earnest, mastered the chapters of catechism, and ere long was the most devoted chap in the room. His big brown eyes never left my face when I spoke to the class. He helped to put the room in order after dismissal, and always lingered until I said, "Good-night; God bless you, Willie!"

He learned his prayers and I gave him a rosary, and as the time drew near for First Communion and Confirmation he became, if possible, more attentive and earnest. Often I spoke to the boys about the saints of God, little anecdotes of charity, devotion and prayer. Once when I had told the story of the early martyrs Will's eyes (ever fixed on me) glowed, and that night he said to me: "Father, I'd like to die a martyr!"

"Well my boy, you might, although not by fire or sword."

"How then, Father?"

"By loving others better than yourself—by giving your life to help others. There are many martyrs in this world, Will."

He said nothing and I forgot the circumstance.

First Communion time came. Will passed the examination and made his general confession. I had grown greatly interested in him, and had spoken to some charitable ladies, who provided him with suitable clothing and had given him work. He was now

a respectable looking lad, a messenger boy. But although I had provided him with a home, he left it to live with an old apple woman, who took him to her warm heart and gave him a little corner in her humble lodgings, and grew fonder of him every day. And he responded to Granny's love by giving her all his earnings.

After Will had been confirmed and made his First Communion he still came to see me, and I noticed with some anxiety he had a hard, hacking cough. I mentioned it, but he only laughed, said it was nothing, "he didn't mind it." But Granny came to see me, greatly worried over her boy.

"Father," said she, "I wish you would bid him not to pray so long in the cold. I do be listening for him to go to bed, but he is on his knees till all hours, with his beads in his hands, and the room do be cold, for we can't have fires at night."

Will's purity and piety had begun to make a deep impression on my mind. He is a chosen soul, I thought, and often he looked to me like a young saint, with his steady brown eyes fixed rapturously on me when I talked of the martyrs and holy ones of God.

One bitter cold February night Will came to see me. I noticed his cough was worse, and spoke to him about taking more care of himself. When he was leaving a blast of icy wind swept through the doorway, nearly taking me off my feet.

"Will," I said, "you must take the cars home. Have you the change?" I added.

"Well, I declare," said Will, feeling in his pockets; "I guess I left my money in my other suit. But I'll run, Father."

"No, you'd freeze a night like this. Here is car fare." And I handed him a new quarter.

"Thank you, Father; I'll borrow it and pay it back," said he with a smile.

"Be off then," I said. "Good-night!"

"But the blessing?"

"God bless you! God bless you!" And I hastily closed the door.

I thought no more of Will for a day or two. The weather grew bitter cold. No one left the house unless he had to do so. But one afternoon the telephone rang and a strange voice asked me could I go to such a house to see a poor person who was calling for me and was surely dying. I took the address and started. It was Granny's humble home, and I met her at the door, her apron up to her eyes and the tears streaming down.

"Oh, Father," she wept, "he's never stopped calling for you!"

"Who?" I exclaimed.

"My poor Willie. He's borrowed something from you, and it's worritting him!"

I asked to be conducted to him at once.

She led me to the little room, and there on a cot was Willie, delirious, calling out he wanted to return the quarter.

"Have you had a doctor?" I said.

"No, Father; sure, it's the priest he's calling for; he only got bad to-day."

I went at once to a telephone near by and called up a physician I knew, who was soon at the house. He looked at Will, shook his head and began to work with him. I went into the next room, and by degrees got the story out of the bewildered Granny.

The night Will left me he was later than usual coming home, and Granny was distressed, she said, it was so bitter cold. At last about midnight two men came to the door with Willie between them. They found him lying in the snow, with blood coming from his mouth, not far from home. He was almost frozen, but gave his address faintly. She had put him to bed, and he didn't seem better in the morning, and suddenly he grew delirious and raved about walking home and borrowing money from me. Strange, I thought; why didn't he ride in the cars? He was overcome by that bitter night, but why did he walk? What did he do with the money?

"Granny, had he any money when he came in?" I said.

"Not a cent, your reverence. When I asked him why he didn't ride he said his money was in his other suit, and when he took bad he was raving that I was to pay you back a quarter. Sure, if he had a quarter, why didn't he take the cars?"

"Sure enough," I thought. "I told him to ride."

I felt uneasy. Where was that quarter? But then

the thought occurred to me that he might have dropped it in the snow.

"The men told me," said Granny, "that they found him senseless, with the blood coming out of his mouth, just yonder, almost in sight of the door. It was a bitter cold wind he faced, comin' over the bridge!" she wailed.

Just then the doctor called me and said quietly: "This is a case of pneumonia and exhaustion. The hemorrhages must have been severe. I don't think he will pull through, Father, but he will be conscious in an hour. I will send some medicine and a nurse."

I was affected more than I could have imagined.

"How long do you think he will live, doctor?"

"It's hard to tell, Father; scarcely twenty-four hours."

"Make him as comfortable as possible," I said.

The doctor left and I sat down by the bed.

Willie muttered in his delirium: "Poor old fellow, I wonder if he did lose it." Then again he murmured: "By loving others better than yourself. By giving your life to help others. Yes, the priest said so. That's the way to be a martyr. I wonder were any martyrs ever frozen to death?" Then he would start up: "Granny! Granny! give back Father ———'s quarter! Mind, I only borrowed it! Give it back to him!"

"Yes, darlin'," said Granny, coming in. "I'll give it back to him. He's here himself. Lie still, honey. Oh, me poor boy!"

"Willie," I said, "do you know me?"

The big brown eyes opened, but there was no sign of recognition.

A nurse came in just then, and I requested her to begin at once to comply with the doctor's directions. I sat in the next room and opened my breviary. I could leave Willie. I felt sure I should be needed. An hour passed. Granny was with the nurse and I sat by the window thinking and trying to read my office and watching the glory of the red sunset that winter afternoon. There was snow on the smoke-tainted roof and the muddy river visible beyond the bridge was filled with ice cakes. The founderies and glass houses belched forth flame and smoke, but the red sunset transformed it all into a glow of crimson glory. The hue of blood was on everything. Type of martyrdom, I thought, and then came the inspiration, is that boy a martyr? How? I must know, for I believe he is.

The nurse called softly: "Father!"

I went into the inner room.

Willie was conscious, weak but smiling.

"I'm so glad, Father," he faltered. "I think I am pretty sick, but I'm so glad you came."

I motioned them to leave and I heard Willie's confession. He wanted to receive Holy Communion. So I left and returned soon with the Blessed Sacrament and the holy oils. He received Holy Viaticum and I anointed him. Then he lay peaceful and quiet with his eyes closed. The door of the next room was open and long crimson gleams of light came through and

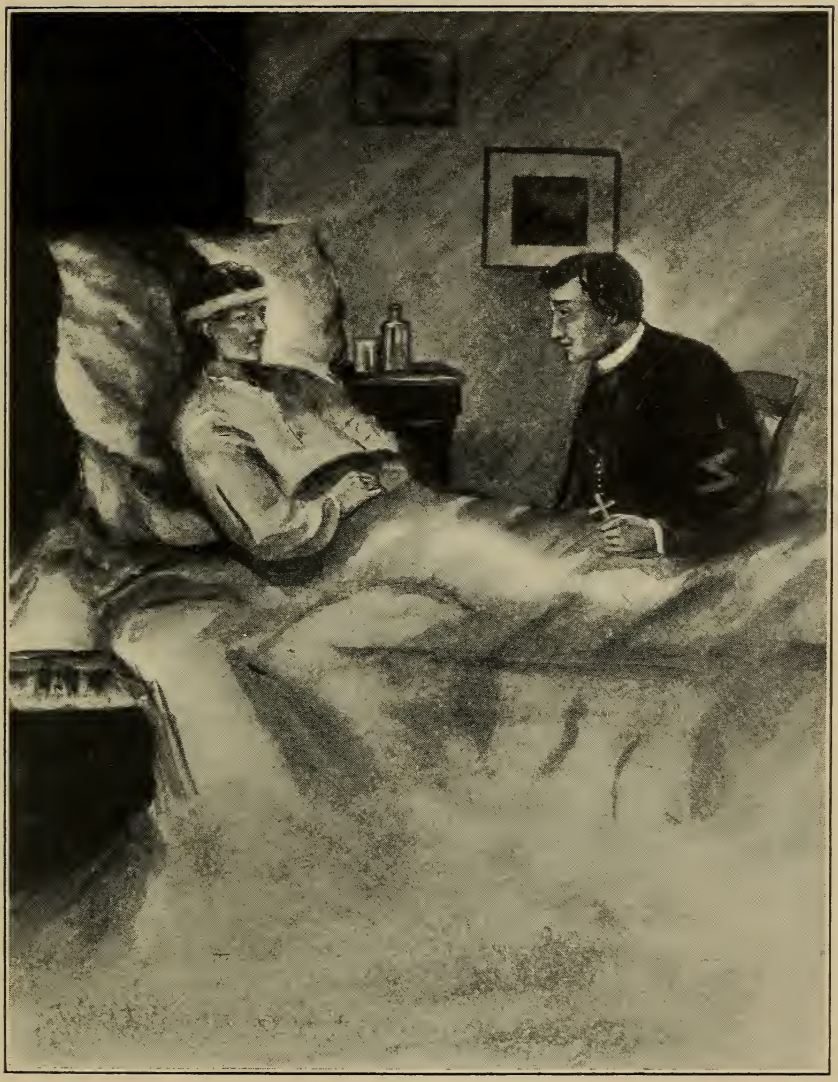
lay on the white counterpane and on the pillow, where the little head rested. There was utter silence except his difficult breathing. The nurse moved about noiselessly. Her look at me was of one who felt that her ministrations were useless, although she smiled at Willie.

"Father," he whispered, "did Granny return your quarter?"

"That's all right, Willie. If she hasn't, she will do so. You are going to heaven soon; don't bother about anything but the thought of our Lord, whom you will soon see." Then a thought struck me. "Willie, what did you do with the quarter I gave you?"

He looked squarely into my face. "Father," he said with difficulty, "I gave it to somebody who needed to ride in the cars more than I did. You know, you told me 'by loving others better than yourself, by giving your life to help others' I could be a martyr. Father, that night I nearly froze. I was so cold walking home, and when the icy air stopped my breath and the blood came I prayed God would make me a martyr, but I only fainted."

Something rose up in my throat and choked me. Here, then, was the secret of the money. The boy had given his car fare to somebody, had tried to walk home over the frozen river and his weak lungs had given out. He was dying now from the effects of his charity. Yes, the blood-red sunset foretold the death of the martyr.



"Father, did Granny return your quarter?"—*Page 134.*

He died that night in his innocence and self-consecration. The last look of the big brown eyes was on the crucifix I held in my hand.

I had High Mass over the remains, and at his funeral I spoke of the noble act that caused his death. There were many in the church, for his peculiar little history was known by a number who had noticed him.

Before I had time to remove the vestments an old white-haired man tottered into the sacristy.

"God forgive me, Father," he wept; "I was the one who unknowingly caused that boy's death. I was at the corner waiting for the car that Tuesday night. I only had a nickel with me, and it was so cold I dropped it into the snow. That boy came along, and I asked him to look for it. He stooped and looked, but the car came so quick that there wasn't a minute, and I begged him to hurry. He slipped a coin into my hand and ran off in another direction. I thought it was my nickel until I got into the car, when I found it was a new quarter. I was terribly surprised, and ever since I could not get him out of my mind. I would have frozen to death if I had not got into the cars that night, for it was bitter cold, and I walk slowly. To think that I should happen on his funeral Mass and learn that he gave up his little life for me!" And the old man wept out loud.

"Yes," I said solemnly, for my heart was deeply moved; "he gave up his little life for you. A martyr only twelve years old!"

The Conversion of the Cook

I HAD BEEN spending a few days in a delightful location. It was at a beautiful little lake, set like a gem in the midst of low hills and verdant woods; a sloping meadow ran down to the water's edge and a great flock of sheep grazed there all day. An old-fashioned mill of half a century ago ground out the farmers' grists, and, save for the clatter of the lumbering machinery, the twitter of the birds floating over the lake, or warbling in the drooping willows, the place was as silent as the Thebais.

My visit was to an invalid lady who had been paralyzed for six years, unable to move hand or foot, and whose patient resignation was a subject of edification to all who knew her. But this tale is not to treat of her (now don't smile)—it is to be all about her cook! Don't you remember what Owen Meredith says:

> "We may live without friends,
> We may live without books,
> But civilized man cannot live without cooks."

Yes, my story is about the cook! It will tell my readers how wondrous are the ways of God and how varied the paths by which He leads His erring sheep back to the fold.

So my story is of the cook. She was a buxom

young woman of about twenty-six, very efficient in her line—in fact, unusually so—with an open, attractive face. I often saw her around, and noticed she observed me very closely and very curiously, as if she had never seen one of my cloth before. In this I was mistaken. When the opportunity came she spoke to me, timidly yet reverently.

"Father, I ought to be a Catholic!"

"And why, my child, are you not one?"

"Father, we always lived in the country; never had much chance to learn religion. My father was not a Catholic—he's dead. My mother is a convert, and I only was baptized and made my First Communion years ago. When I saw you and heard you talk something rose up in my heart and a great desire came upon me to do what was right."

Poor woman! The mission of charity in which I was engaged and the blessed words of prayer uttered had gone to her soul and wakened her faith.

"But why, my child, have you left off doing what was right?"

"Well, Father, I have a husband who has been drinking steadily for three years. He lies around the house and curses and swears at religion, especially the Catholic religion. I was tired quarreling with him, and the only way to have peace was to let church and religion alone, and yet, Father, in my heart there has been no peace."

"Have you any children?"

"Yes, Father, a girl of ten and a boy of two, and they have never been baptized."

"Poor, innocent children. And do you not know they will never see God's face if you do not have them baptized, my poor woman?"

"Yes, Father, and oh! I do want to have them baptized and come back to my duty. You know I ran off when I was sixteen and got married by a Protestant minister."

"You are in a bad fix, I must acknowledge. Your case is a special one, and you must see your pastor."

"But, Father, can't you do anything for me? Can't you come with me and get the children at least baptized, and I promise you I will bring them up Catholics and do what is right myself the first opportunity. Father, it seems to me you have brought God's grace here—it has touched my very soul. It has made me want to do right by those children, at least in the act of baptism. If they should die I would go crazy. If they were not baptized, I know it would be on my soul, and besides I am afraid to go to the priest by myself."

The tears were in her eyes. She was deeply in earnest. What should I do? It was none of my business to meddle in the affairs of a strange parish. What would the pastor think? What would he not have a right to say? Yet, if I should go with her it would be a step in the right direction. It would place two souls in a state of grace, and perhaps both husband and wife might finally see the light and there would be

four more precious souls gathered to the feet of the Master. I would go!

"My good woman, I will go with you to the pastor, and we will see what can be done. Suppose you bring the children here and let me instruct the little girl some."

Her face beamed with joy. "Oh, thank you, Father! I will never forget your kindness. I will bring them to-morrow, and I will make some excuse to go to the village, for my husband would kill me if he knew they were baptized."

"How far away is the village?"

"Six miles, Father; but we have a horse and rig, and it will be easy to get there."

Six miles, I thought, and I was growing uneasy over my promise. But when I saw the little girl next day, and found her all eagerness for baptism, when I taught her to say her prayers and explained all that was necessary under the circumstances, gave her a little prayer book and watched her devour it, I felt it was God's work and I must push it through.

On a Saturday afternoon, caught in a terrific storm of thunder, lightning and rain, the party started out, and after waiting in a barn for an hour ventured over muddy roads to the neighboring town. I met the pastor at first alone, explained the matter and received his courteous attention. He knew the poor woman, had often pitied her circumstances and had no way of braving her husband, and hailed my accidental interference as a miracle of grace. He consented at once

to baptize the two children and got the necessary articles ready in the sacristy. He spoke seriously to the mother, and she promised all he asked of her. The two children were baptized and I was sponsor, and it was a happy party that left the rectory that summer afternoon.

The return of the mother to her duty is only a question of time, and since then I made it a point to meet the husband accidentally (?) and talked to him pleasantly, won his attention and exacted a promise that he would say the Lord's Prayer every day until he should hear from me. I mean to write him and see if we cannot coax him on a little further by Father Searle's "Plain Facts for Fair Minds."

It is a consoling thing to bring God's grace and love into a faraway spot, and I ask my readers to say at least a Hail Mary daily for the full return of this family to the Heart of Christ.

An Upright Heart Finds the Truth

In one of our late missions I saw a fine, well-preserved woman accompanied by a younger person, evidently her daughter, every evening at the church. She was elderly, but the marks of a strong mind, a self-reliant character, a staunch, stalwart nature (so to speak) stamped her countenance and showed in every movement. She seemed to have the respect and deference also of the whole town. Her appearance struck me, and I made inquiries about her and learned she was the wealthiest woman in the town—a widow of German birth. Her husband and herself were strict Lutherans and had come to this country in early life. They had labored and worked together, and although he had been dead some years, she continued his business with a strong, able hand and was now quite wealthy. Her adherence to the Lutheran faith, in which he died, was unfailing, and yet their daughters had been sent to a convent school because, with a keen sense of the correctness of things, they saw that the education received there was the purest and the best. No restrictions were placed on the girls in matters of religion, but the two older became Episcopalians, and to the bitter sorrow of their parents died while young. The remaining daughter became a Catholic and after her father's death, with gentle persuasion, tried to soothe the stricken heart of her only surviving parent

by quietly endeavoring to lead her mother to the faith where alone her heart could be in peace, where her dead might be prayed for and every longing of her soul satisfied. To gratify this Catholic daughter—this cherished child—the mother attended the mission. The days passed on, and although deeply impressed she was unchanged in her faith. She was not a character easily influenced, and old habits and beliefs were strong. But she was "good and right of heart," and wanted to do God's will, and the Lord was not to be outdone in generosity. She did not miss a single lecture. The mission closed; she was still a Lutheran, but now a spirit of unrest seemed to take possession of her. She was disturbed and unhappy, and at my departure to another mission some six miles away it seemed as if she were resisting grace and shutting her eyes to the light. I saw the struggle and prayed for her, and fervently; her daughter also prayed.

Suddenly, during my second mission, I saw her in the church with her daughter. She had come that distance, urged by grace and her upright heart, and after attending anew to the lectures she came to me one evening.

"Father," she said, "I have made up my mind. I can resist no longer. I firmly believe in the Catholic faith, and I am determined to become a member of the only true Church!"

Of course I was overjoyed. There was little instruction to give. She had not gone blindly into this change. She had thought it out and studied all that

was essential. I baptized her the next day, and her happiness and that of her daughter can scarcely be described. They are most fervent in their thanksgiving for the gift of faith.

It seems to me that this good woman's conversion is owing to nothing so much as to her upright heart and sincere character as well as to her threescore years of a God-fearing life.

Snatched From the Burning

Passing between the long lines of cots in a Western hospital, I was strangely attracted by the intelligent countenance of one of the patients, a man of middle age. I had been on a sick call, and was about to depart, when, as is my practice, I scanned the faces of the occupants of the cots in an endeavor to locate some sufferer who stood in need of my services, but who, as sometimes happens, had not the grace or the courage to ask for them. Directing a nurse's attention to the stranger, I inquired as to his identity.

"He is a Protestant preacher, sir," was the reply. "He has come down pretty low when he has to be taken to a ward in a City Hospital!"

"Where does he belong?" I asked.

"Oh, somewhere out West. But he has some few friends. They bring him magazines and books."

I went to the stranger and saluted him pleasantly.

"I suppose you know I am a Catholic priest," said I. "But I always like to say a friendly word to those who are suffering, even if they are not Catholics."

"I am not a Catholic," said he.

"Oh, I know that," said I. "But we are both ministers of the Gospel, and in that way we are not strangers."

He drifted at once to other topics, spoke fluently and well of the events of the day and showed such an

intelligent grasp of affairs in general and particular that I felt my interest in him growing, and I said so.

"It isn't often one meets a man like you in a hospital ward. I have been very agreeably surprised, and I sincerely hope you will soon recover. May I call to see you again?"

"If you wish," said he. "I have not many friends. Life is made up of many bitter things. Such, at least, has been my life. But pray for me."

I left, but as I pressed his hand I said: "Trust in God. He is our best friend, and never forsakes us. You know that. Good-by."

I went again and again to the hospital, but my friend seemed worse each time. He was seized with dreadful shivering fits. He trembled from head to foot. The very bed shook. It was distressing to look at him. I could not get him out of my mind. One day, going to see him, I met a man at the hospital gate.

"You seem interested in Mr. P——," said he.

"The Protestant minister?" said I. "Yes, a most intelligent man. I feel quite sorry he grows worse."

"Protestant minister!" he ejaculated. "Why, he's only a renegade Catholic who went West, lived wild and turned to preaching eventually for a living. He thinks nobody knows him here, but in his younger days he was a fairly good Catholic. He hasn't long to live, poor fellow. I go there to see a friend of mine, and he knows I know him."

I didn't say a word, but hurried to the ward. The poor man was in one of the terrible nervous fits, shak-

ing as if he had an uncontrollable chill. The perspiration was standing out on his forehead and rolling on the pillow. The shadow of death was on his face.

I sat down on the chair close to him and taking his clammy hand, I said:

"My friend, you are going to die, and you know I am a Catholic priest. You are a Catholic, and I want you to make your confession. I will help you all I can." And I took my stole out of my pocket.

He looked at me with a despairing look, and then he turned his face away.

"What," said I, "you are going to refuse this last grace?"

"Father," said he, "there is no salvation for me. I have been a traitor of the deepest dye. I have disgraced my family. I have broken my mother's heart. I have left the Church of my childhood and railed against it in public and in private. I have been blacker than Judas, because I have betrayed all that I loved with greater knowledge and with bitter malice."

And just then another one of those uncontrollable chills seized hold of him, and, lest he should injure himself, some of the orderlies came over and held him down.

When he became quiet I spoke calmly and soothingly to him. His frank acknowledgment had all the effect of confession to his soul. It broke all the rigid barriers of pride and despair. It was enough. I saw my opportunity, and I availed myself of it with all the tact I possessed, with the result that he poured out

his soul in a flood of humble and unreserved self-accusation. It was like the rushing of many waters, and when it was gone it left his soul purified from all stains and in peace. A sweet, holy calm seemed to possess him, and he lay there as a babe sleeping. While I ministered unto him the sacred Unction, great tears rolled down his cheeks. When I was through and was placing my stole and oil stock in my pocket, he opened wide his eyes and in a look of ineffable joy and confidence he said: "God is good. No truer word did you ever utter, Father, than when you said He was our best friend."

I warmly pressed his hand and turned to go. As I looked around I saw the large, burly Negro orderly, who with difficulty held the sick man's feet a half hour before, leaning on his mop, silently and reverently watching the whole proceeding, for it was in the open ward. I came away, promising to return next day; and on my way home marveled at the goodness and mercy of God, who had sought out this wandering sheep and brought him back to the pastures he had deserted. I went back early next morning, but the weary stranger had found his Father. Death had come in the night. As I glanced at the empty bed, I saw a crippled, merry-hearted Irishman beckon me to his corner.

"Father, ye did a good work for that poor fellow," said he. "He died in peace and quietness, and, I think, happy and thankful to the Almighty; but the black man ye saw moppin' the floor said it was the 'powerful

little cotton plasters' ye put on his hands and feet that quieted him down and gave him the happy death, an' maybe, Father dear, you'll have his soul on the strength of them same 'plasters.' "

"True to the sunny isle you came from, Patrick," thought I, "mingling a joke with the keenest suffering."

Poor Little Madeleine!

In this sad, true tale there is a lesson for men and women who are addicted to profane language, especially those unhappy parents who dare to utter such in the hearing of little children. The Almighty punishes with terrible vengeance those who take the name of the Lord God in vain!

. . . . . .

"D—n you, for a little divil!"

The words came from the lips of a frowsy, bloated-faced woman, who stood in the doorway of a small frame house in one of the side streets of the city. The woman was not yet thirty, but although she might once have been handsome, with a bold, black-eyed, dashing beauty, she seemed a most repulsive object as she stood there, leaning on her broom and smoothing down her torn, dirty apron.

She was laughing at a curly-haired baby, about three years old, who sat flat on the dirty pavement, with a fire shovel in her hand, which she beat on the muddy bricks with all her might, while she held a struggling kitten under her arm.

If the coarse words provoked indignation or disgust, the scene almost provoked a smile, for the baby lifted up her pretty, dirty face, around which curls, that should have been soft and golden, were tossed un-

combed and unwashed, and, sticking out her little tongue at her mother, stuttered out:

"So is 'oo a yittle divil!"

The woman burst into a rude laugh, and, throwing down her broom, picked up the child in her arms, shovel, kitten and all and bore her screaming into the house.

It was a grim, sadly ludicrous sight, yet one to make the angels weep. With the language of such a mother for the music of her babyhood, what was to be expected of Madeleine? Passers by sometimes stopped, astonished at the stammering baby voice precociously imitating the profane speech heard in the sacred spot called "home!"

Yet Madeleine, like a gay-feathered parrot, took up the terrible words we would not write, and lisped them as she would a prayer, knowing no difference.

Every one noticed Madeleine when her face was washed and her fair curls combed and clustering. Sometimes, in clean apron and pretty dress, she would go to the "big school" near by with some little friend, and so winning were her baby ways and so cunning her little speeches that her blue eyes and sweet face took every one by storm. Teachers and "big girls" fell in love with her at once. As long as she was pleased, all was sunshine; the rosebud face was all aglow. But cross her once, and, presto! no trooper in the King's army could rip out a fiercer oath than this three-year-old!

One day something that she wanted was taken from

her, when she stamped her little slippers and spit out this speech:

"D—n 'oo, divil lady!"

The young Sister of Mercy, whose darling she had been, grew pale, stopped her ears, and actually ran from the baby in horror, while the more hardened youngsters around shouted their wicked merriment.

But Madeleine—did she know what she had said? No; how could she? Alas! it was her native atmosphere. Alas! again for those elders who give voice to profanity before innocent children; on them will the sin be visited.

What was to become of this pretty, precocious baby? "If she begins thus," said some, "when she gets sense the edge of horror will be worn off." And yet every one was interested in Madeleine. So engaging, so outspoken in her affection, so irresistible in her sweetness, her little face was like that of a cherub until her temper was roused, and then there was nothing but sulphur in the air.

The good Sisters in the "big school" tried many ways in the short visits that Madeleine made to break her of her terrible habit, but only succeeded in making her cry bitterly and look from one to the other in terror and amazement. She was too young; her mother could not be approached, and they were in despair. But in their convent home they prayed for both mother and child.

One day Madeleine, in spite of her mother's profane commands, persisted in playing too near the open

grate. Her little dress caught fire. The neighbors were aroused and the fire was extinguished. And amid her own piercing screams and her mother's cries, the child was hurried in an ambulance to the hospital, where it was found she was beyond hope. She had inhaled the flames.

At first the mother's grief was wild and furious, but when she found she would not be permitted to see Madeleine if she did not calm herself, she grew quieter and implored to be allowed to remain.

Madeleine's face was untouched by the flames, but her little body was horribly burned. And as she lay on the little cot, wrapped in ointment and dressing, she screamed with pain, and startled the doctors by her profanity. Shocked and amazed, they said to each other: "Where has this beautiful child come from?" And the trembling mother, bowed down in the distant corner of the room, heard and wept. She was brought face to face with her awful life and her responsibility, and striking her breast again and again, acknowledged to the pitying Sisters who tried to console her that she alone was to blame.

Two days she watched by the little cot, looking into her baby's face with the yearning mother love that touches the hearts of all men, trying to undo her awful work and make the baby lips lisp a prayer. But she had taught her too well. Madeleine did not understand the new language. She was not responsible for her three years of life, and all who ministered about the cot were glad when unconsciousness sealed her

lips. She died, and the heart-broken mother felt her punishment was almost greater than she could bear. But tender and kindly words soothed her and brought her back to God; and over the little white casket she registered a vow that her life should be changed.

She has kept her vow. She is a changed being. And though the lesson was a terrible one, it has saved her soul.

. . . . . .

Need I say more? Do those who take the name of the Lord in vain ever think that retribution may be waiting for them?

Poor little Madeleine!

His Catholic Wife

"THANK YOU for coming, Father," said the proprietor of the hotel. "It is a stubborn case. The girl will not be married except by a priest, and the man having persuaded her to come here for the purpose, can get no farther with all his persuasion. My wife has been with them since they arrived."

"Where are they?" said I gravely. I was shown into a quiet parlor where the mistress of the hotel sat with the young man and woman.

The young man was talking earnestly to the girl, who was quite young and pretty.

She rose respectfully and advanced to meet me.

"You are very good to come here, Father," she said, with the ease of one used to meeting strangers.

"But, my dear young woman," said I, "don't you know this is a very strange affair for you? Are you not aware that a matter like this not only requires the consent of your parents, but a certain respectable publicity?"

"Father, I know all about it. It is certainly a runaway match, as the world will call it, but there is no help for it. I have thought it all over, and there is no other way out. I can't be married at home, for if we were to live a hundred years my family will never consent, and I will marry no one but Arthur. I shall never give up my faith, and shall bring him to it some

day; and as for the rest, we can both work, for we are young and strong."

The young man spoke for the first time.

"All this is true, sir. I will do all I can to be a good husband, and never interfere with Annie's religion. I have no faith, but my faith in her. She consented to marry me if I got a priest, and my friend here and his wife have helped me, as you see, in bringing you here. He seems to know you well."

"Yes, he is an old friend, and happened to know I was around. I am aware it would be hard to adjust the matter now in the young lady's parish. She cannot go home. She might be compromised if she stays here. Can you wait an hour or two? I will go to see the Bishop myself. It is only a short distance from here. I will return."

The girl answered: "Thank you from my heart, Father. Certainly we will wait. Arthur has the license in his pocket, and we are both of age. I am aware a dispensation is required. You know (smiling) I have relatives priests!"

"I know all about you," said I. "And I know when a woman will, she will, and that's an end on't, and of two evils we must choose the lesser." So saying I left.

In two hours I returned. The proprietor and his wife were still with the young couple.

"I will marry you now," said I.

The simple ceremony was soon over, and I gave the bride and groom some serious and strong advice. The

proprietor of the hotel and I had a little talk. He promised to have the marriage in the morning papers. The young couple departed to a distant city, where they were to reside with the groom's mother.

It was not an unusual affair. Opposition, perhaps too long persisted in, had made the elopement almost pardonable. No permission was asked this time, because refusals had gone before. And there was only one good reason for this—the groom was a Protestant, and in that strict Catholic family (would there were more like them) permission for a mixed marriage was not to be thought of for a moment. We will not dwell on this family's indignation and distress when the newspapers were read next morning. Our story is with the wife who for love of the husband of her choice thus set out in life. Out of evil often cometh good, says the proverb.

She went to her husband's family and was the only Catholic there; but she made her faith respected. After the birth of a little boy the husband's health began to fail. He was ordered West. He came home better. Two more children were given to them. Again the husband's health failed, and now reverses came, but again he went West at great sacrifices, and the brave little wife prayed and worked alone. After some months word came he was improving and had settled with an uncle in Michigan and only needed Annie to become perfectly well. She could ill afford the journey, but it was her duty. Leaving her two children with their grandmother, who was still a strong

Methodist, the wife took her baby in her arms and started for Michigan to the little border village, where there was scarcely any civilization. Her heart was heavy enough when she saw she would have to rough it, but she took up her burden bravely, offering all she suffered for the conversion of her husband.

This is what she met in her new home: A log house three miles from the village, where the uncle and three rough, good-hearted lumber men lodged, in the midst of a clearing. Her husband instead of getting better, grew steadily worse, and the little division of the rude house, partitioned off for their bed room, allowed the winds of heaven to penetrate a hundred chinks, and the snow and rain as well. She was the only woman, and the only Catholic, around, and to her lot now fell the care of all the household as well as her sick husband. Every one was kind, but more than kindness was needed. As the winter grew colder and colder, only one room was habitable, and into it was crowded the cooking stove, the dining table and the invalid, together with the rough seats of the lumber men. And the invalid became weaker and weaker.

There was a little church three miles away, and once a month a priest came there and said Mass.

Poor young wife! It was a sad change for her, and on Christmas Eve, as she sat weary and worn, thinking of her absent children, of her old home, of all she had left behind, she could hardly suppress the tears. Her husband was wrapped in blankets in an armchair

near the fire, and his hollow cough came rasping on her ear. She went over to him quickly.

"Annie," he said feebly, "are you going to church to-morrow?"

"Yes, Arthur. Don't you know it will be Christmas Day as well as Sunday?"

"Christmas Day!" he sighed. "Christmas Day! and such a Christmas for you. Oh, Annie, how I reproach myself for bringing you here."

"Hush, Arthur," said the brave woman. "It was my duty to come. You will break my heart if you say you regret my coming. No woman who loves her husband—no good Catholic woman—would do anything else."

"Aye, indeed," said the man; "you may well say good Catholic woman. I have watched you, Annie. If there is a true religion on earth, it is the one that made you what you are. Annie, could you bring your clergyman up here after service?"

"Do you mean it, Arthur?" was the joyful cry.

"I mean every word of it. I want to talk to him. I haven't much time now."

Annie bent over him with sorrowing tears, but her heart was full of gratitude.

The journey through the bitter wind and snow next morning was full of thanksgiving for the Babe of Bethlehem. The priest came, a man who understood his fellow-man. The few difficulties in the way of the invalid were smoothed, and with unbounded faith and gratitude to his wife, Arthur received baptism.

"If there is a true religion on earth, it is the one that made you what you are."—*Page 158.*

"I will come before New Year's," said the priest, "and you can make your First Holy Communion. Your wife will instruct you."

And Annie instructed her husband, who was as docile as a little child.

The priest came back and gave him his first Communion, and as he became weaker and one could see he had not long to live, he explained the Sacrament of Extreme Unction and anointed him.

Here was the young wife's reward at last. Out in the wild lumber region of Michigan, far from home and her little ones, she had now from heaven the conversion she had prayed for so earnestly. The rough lumber men were touched at her mingled grief and happiness, and, although they were hard worked and rude, did all they could to soften her lot.

One morning after they had gone to the deep forest for the day the end came. Peacefully and quietly her husband died in the deep isolation of that lonely forest. The brave girl, alone with her baby in that desolate log cabin, after the first bitter paroxysm of grief, closed her husband's eyes, composed his limbs and gathered herself together to think what must be done.

"I must get an undertaker, and I must telegraph him," she murmured. "I cannot go into the deep woods after the men; it is easier to walk the three miles to the village."

Placing her little sleeping babe securely at the foot of the bed, where its dead father lay, she donned her wraps and locked the door and began her walk to the

village. It was not yet noon, and it was snowing, a dry, powdery snowstorm such as is common in the West, but she walked bravely on. She reached the village, sent telegrams at the little railroad station to her mother-in-law and her own family, announcing Arthur's death and asking what she should do. Then she went to the undertaker. She was distressed beyond expression to find he was not a licensed undertaker and would not go to the house. He was sorry, but he had none of the requirements for disposing of the remains, and directed her to the "correct" undertaker, fifteen miles away. Everything was rough in that primitive settlement. The men were all working, the women were few, and, sad to say, those who wanted to help her did not dare. They, too, had seen death under similar circumstances. The man was moved at her tears, and when he heard she had not tasted food that day, forced her to swallow some hot milk, and said he would try to get her a horse and sled if she would drive.

There was no alternative. If she returned home to look after her baby she would have to come back and thus make the same journey over again. The lumber men would not be back till sundown.

Breathing a prayer that her dear ones, the living and the dead, might meet with nothing harmful, she took the reins and started on her fifteen-mile journey. The horse was a poor one, but she found the undertaker, who came back with her and the ready-made coffin in the sled. His horse he fastened to the back

of the sled. She reached the village, returned the borrowed horse, and weary and worn after her thirty-six miles of travel in the bitter cold, took her seat again with the undertaker, the coffin at her feet, and arrived at her cabin just as the lumber men returned home.

They knew in a moment all that had happened, and respectfully gave all the help they could.

The baby was sleeping peacefully at its dead father's feet, apparently unconscious of its long fast, and the weary mother thanked God while she ministered to it.

And when her husband lay in the coffin, his worn features in repose, like one peacefully sleeping, her desolation broke upon her, and she cried out: "Oh, God! what next?"

She did not wish to bury him in that wild place until at least she had heard from her home in Pennsylvania, and the undertaker promised to wait two days at least, and if an answering telegram came he would bring it to her.

Can you imagine that lonely vigil? All night the men watched in turn, but next day inexorable contract drove them into the forest, and Annie was alone with her babe and her dead.

No reply to the telegram came, and her heart was sore and heavy. She had only twenty dollars for the funeral expenses and the journey home when all was over, and it was not enough; she could not ask alms of those with whom she shared her poor home, for money was scarce with them.

Wearily she watched the snowflakes, ministered to her babe, and from time to time looked at the placid face of the dead. All alone until evening she sat, until the lumber men came back from their work, and then they had to be fed and the domestic work attended to, almost all done in sight of the coffin which held the remains of him to whom she had given the best years of her young life, and not once had she regretted. Such is woman's love.

Again the night watch, and the next morning the undertaker arrived with a despatch. It was from her mother-in-law:

"Bring remains home. Will meet you at depot, Chicago. Wire what train you leave."

With a heart relieved, yet very sad, the young widow began her preparations. In her poverty there was not much to take with her, and when she told the undertaker she had but twenty dollars for him, and begged him for a loan until she could send it back, the good man added twenty more and assisted her in getting everything ready for the train, even sending the telegram to meet her mother-in-law in Chicago.

Perhaps you will wonder why those who were near and dear to her did not help her; but this is a true story —its dramatis personæ are still living. They did not, and the fact remains. Truth outweighs fiction.

The journey home began. There was a sad meeting in Chicago. The rough box in the baggage car, the mother and the young widow and her babe. And when it was found how straitened were her means

every help was given, and as the train whirled on towards Pennsylvania the story of the hardships of that Western home was told with mutual tears.

In the meantime the second telegram was discussed in the young widow's family, and when it was found the Protestant mother-in-law had been the first to go to Annie's relief, there was a tinge of remorse and shame, and the hard spirit of disapproval which had followed the girl since her runaway marriage melted. Her brother, a priest, declared he would start at once and meet her, first despatching to the mother-in-law a message, which was re-sent to Chicago and was answered on the journey:

"Meet us in Erie. Train 26."

It was Saturday, and the young curate had not time to provide a substitute for his services next day, and when he arrived in Erie, and the hours passed with no signs of the train, he grew anxious. Inquiries elicited the fact that the train had met with a wreck ten miles outside the city, and the delay was indefinite. He was at a loss what to do. With the assistance of a brother priest a telephone message was sent, and it was finally settled that the remains should be removed from the train and buried next day in a lot belonging to some member of the family near by. The brother priest promised to take a horse and ride out to the place, and thus the young curate was able to catch a midnight train for home and be ready for his Sunday duties.

Poor Annie! Her troubles had never given her an hour's rest. At last her husband's remains were placed

in the quiet cemetery and the strange priest blessed the grave. When all was over they returned to the mother-in-law's home, and the widow was again with her children, whom she had not seen for a year.

Is it surprising she was seïzed with illness which kept her helpless for several weeks?

When she recovered she started out to seek work to support her children and herself, for she would not be a burden on the mother of her husband, who had become devoted to her little grandchildren and who also had a strong affection for her son's Catholic wife.

Annie obtained employment as a saleslady, and her ready intelligence and wit and her attractive personal appearance made an impression on her employers. She soon had an assured position and was able to help the home finances considerably. Her children soon became old enough to be instructed for the sacraments, but there was no Catholic school near. It was weary work for Annie to instruct them at night when she was tired and the children sleepy. At last the grandmother offered to hear the little catechism and see to their studying it. With an unspoken prayer that this good woman might see the light, Annie gladly consented.

The end can be readily guessed. The sincere, good Christian grandmother, reading and enforcing the words of the catechism, found the light.

Our story is told when, after many days, she was baptized and the children and their grandmother made their first Communion together and the happy widow,

who had passed through many trials and an almost incredible experience, found herself, with tears of joy, the centre of a devoted group in a truly Catholic home.

She whose devotion proved so fruitful works cheerfully day after day, gladly accepting life's crosses and praising God that He enabled her to bring these five souls—husband, mother and three little ones—to His sacred feet.

Is there not an apostolate for every Catholic wife in the family circle? Look around, reader, and bring the question home.

Converted by History and Shakespeare

Once I knew her as an interesting child. She is now a charming woman. She is a convert to the faith, and when I asked her how it was, she told me the story.

Of all her stock and kin, she is the only one in the Church. Father, mother, brothers and sisters are still living, and in her childhood a Catholic was spoken of with contempt and derision. She had not one Catholic acquaintance, nor any Catholic friends, but always something like resentment stirred her heart every time the faith was mocked. She wanted to defend what she knew nothing about, and every one told her so.

When she went to school, study was delightful to her. Her remarkable memory and logical brain, her versatile talents, even before she reached her "teens," were a subject of pride to teachers and parents.

She began to study English history quite critically before she was ten years old, and at the same time studied Shakespeare's historical plays. A thousand questions rose in her mind as to the actions of Henry VIII. on the subject of his marriages, divorces and wholesale wife-killing, and especially his rebellion against the Church, and her teachers' answers were not satisfactory. She decided in her childish mind that he was a monster, and when it came to the point of his assuming the supremacy of the faith and becom-

ing the head of the Episcopal Church, of which she was a member, her whole soul recoiled in horror from the thought. She accidentally mentioned this to a teacher in the college, with whom she was slightly acquainted, and when she found this lady was a Catholic, and agreed with her opinion, she opened her heart.

This woman was rather startled at the clear brain and logical mind of this little girl of ten, and rather shrank (lest she should lose her situation) from the task of answering the thousand questions asked; but she gave Edith books, and once allowed her to go to Benediction with her.

The child was almost wrapped in ecstacy. Here, in this church, she felt a joy, a satisfaction she found nowhere else. It was really the house of God. Her heart told her so, and many a time she stole there alone to pray. She read everything about Catholics she could find, always disdaining everything against the faith, and boldly defending it in a way that startled her preceptors; and at home, while she was a good, church-going Episcopalian, no one dared to defame Catholic doctrine in her presence, and she was so clever at repartee that her opponent always got the worst of it. Shakespeare was her favorite author, and she appeared in amateur productions on the college stage.

Time passed on, and one day as she was making a stolen visit to the Catholic church, in fact, the cathedral of her city, the Bishop passed through the nave. She knew him by sight, and followed him into the residence.

"May I speak to you, sir?" she said.

"Certainly, my child," said the prelate. "What is it?"

"Why, I love the Catholic religion, and I want to be a Catholic."

"And why, my little girl?" said the surprised Bishop.

"Because there is nothing but contradiction in our religion," said the wise little lady. "There is no peace, for even our ministers do not agree. But when I go into your church I feel as if I were in the house of God and He was there, and, besides, Catholics all believe the same thing."

"What is your name, dear, and where do you live?"

"My name is Edith ———, and I live in ——— street."

"Are there any Catholics at home?"

Edith laughed. "Father would banish them if there were. He hates the name. I think he would punish me if he knew I spoke to you or came to this church."

"And yet you want to be a Catholic?"

"Of course I do, sir; and I'll be one some day."

"Yes," said the Bishop, placing his hand on the child's head, "I think you will. How old are you?"

"Nearly thirteen."

"Well, suppose you wait a while. Suppose you wait just five years, and if you are of the same mind as you are now, come and tell me, and you shall be a Catholic."

"Five years!" said Edith, aghast. "Why, I'll be an old woman."

The Bishop laughed a ringing laugh.

"You won't think so then, my dear. But you must wait till then, for I won't let you say anything to me before the five years are up."

"And what shall I do all that time?" said Edith, mournfully.

"Just what you are doing now—going to school, studying well and trying to read the correct side of history as well as the side your text-books give you."

"I love Shakespeare," said the child, "and I am putting him in contrast with my English history. The books I study do not tell the truth about Henry the Eighth."

The Bishop looked startled at the little logician. She amazed him. It was either wonderful grace from heaven or wonderful precocity.

"Well, child, read other histories and be sure to say your prayers, and come back in just five years. And now good-by, and God bless you, Edith. I won't forget our bargain."

But although this extraordinary incident did remain in the Bishop's mind for many days, at length it was forgotten.

Not so with Edith. She said in her heart: "I am a Catholic, and have just five years to wait before I can tell them all."

She continued a brilliant course of study, was always first in her classes and evinced remarkable talent in amateur theatricals.

When she was seventeen, after a course of study in

New York, it was decided she had histrionic gifts of a high order, and she began a stage career. At first she seemed to win favor, but after a few months as an actress she found the life too hard; her nerves were unstrung, her health shaken, and she returned to her home, her ambition disillusioned, her heart disappointed.

She wanted to be an actress. She was nearly eighteen. During the past years she had never lost sight of the Bishop's words. The five years were now up. And she had read "English history" thoroughly, and studied books explanatory of Catholic doctrines. She had delved deep into all sorts of classic literature, and with a wonderful memory had made herself perfectly at home with the classics, with all sorts of topics, and finished an extended college course. Her year on the stage had even made her more eager to be educated "all around." She had a Catholic prayer book now and a crucifix. She hesitated about a rosary, lest she might lose it somewhere.

Her period of probation ended, this extraordinary girl, who had no Catholic instruction, no Catholic friends, no home influence to help her, presented herself at the Bishop's house.

The Bishop had changed greatly in five years. So had Edith. She was a beautiful young woman; and when she introduced herself as the little Edith ——— who had been directed by him to return to him after five years, he could scarcely believe his senses.

He remembered the circumstances perfectly, and

asked her innumerable questions. She told him the story of her life simply. He was deeply interested. He had no objections to offer, but he gave her a little catechism and appointed a time for her baptism.

Edith returned at the appointed hour, with the whole catechism memorized. The Bishop asked her question after question. He even went into abstruse questioning. He could not puzzle her nor shake her faith. He was conquered.

"Edith," he said at last, "you are a child of grace. God has done wonders for you. Go home and think over it all, and to-morrow I will baptize and confirm you."

With delight Edith returned home. There was no use saying a word about it there. She made up her mind that she would tell them the next day, after she was baptized, that she was a Catholic. And let come what might, she would face it. If she were put out of the house, she would be a teacher, and she felt she would be eminently qualified.

Next day she was baptized and confirmed privately in the cathedral, after the Bishop himself had given her some private instructions for her first confession and first Holy Communion, which she was quite prepared to make in a day or two. She went to confession to the Bishop, heard his Mass and with tears of devotion approached the Holy Table. She breakfasted with the Bishop and then went home, and by his advice declared she was a Catholic. Of course, there was a storm, but Edith would take none of it

seriously. She knew what she had done. She was ready to leave the house, and laughingly told them she would go that day. But one after another cooled down, and finally she had it all her own way, embracing them all, through sheer happiness, and promising them heartily, to their horror, that she would pray them into the Catholic Church.

She has not done this yet, reader, but she has radiated the beauty and loveliness of a noble womanly character by her fervent practice of the one true faith. She is the centre of a circle who love her and look up to her; and if her mission is not yet accomplished, she has before her a long life wherein to fulfill it.

"After all," she said, smiling, "I guess my conversion is due, first, to God's goodness to me, and then to Shakespeare and English history."

But I replied: "To those who love God all things work together unto good."

Out of the Darkness

It was summer in the foothills of the Adirondacks. Visitors were coming and going, among them a charming old lady and her two lovely daughters. This amiable and sweet old person was of unusual piety and goodness. She loved God and her neighbor, was a devout Bible reader and burning with zeal for the salvation of those wandering souls that were not members of the "enlightened" Protestant Church. More than anything else she was full of pity for the poor "Papists"—those precious souls whose misguided pastors led them through devious ways to perdition—as she believed.

In her sincere zeal she pondered over their misfortune and almost felt herself to be a prophetess sent to warn them of their danger. The more she dreamed, the more anxious she became for an opportunity. She was oblivious of the beauty of the grand old mountains, the royal woods, the crisp, piney odors of the hills and the delights of their wooded pathways. Her only thought was of religion and how she could place some soul on the right path to heaven.

Her opportunity came. The Catholic pastor of the vicinity had a congregation of French-Canadians, and although his church was fifteen miles away from the town where our venerable friend stayed, she determined to pay him a visit and state her "mission." He

received her cordially, and from commonplace topics they drifted to religion.

"Do you know," said the lady, with all courtesy and gentleness, "I have been thinking much of you since I saw you in your church. Forgive me when I say that I grieve that one so intelligent as you are should be led away, with all his people, from the purity of the Gospel (as we read it in the Bible) to the errors of Rome."

"And are you so sure of that, madam?" said the priest.

"Indeed I am, or I would not dare introduce the subject. Feeling myself so entirely right, I do not think it presumptuous in me to acknowledge this strong, unquenchable desire to see you right, too. I feel it is an inspiration, a light, even a *mission* from the Holy Ghost, to guide you to the Lord Jesus."

The priest respected her evident sincerity, and knowing it would be useless to begin a controversy, he said mirthfully:

"My dear madam, I believe you to be entirely sincere in your desire to convert me, and if you can convince me that I am wrong I am most willing to listen, but only on one condition."

"Name it, my dear sir," said the delighted lady.

"Have you ever heard of a prayer called the 'Hail Mary?' "

The lady reflected.

"Yes," she said. "I had a little maid in my family, a little French-Canadian orphan who was a pious

Roman Catholic. When I asked her if she prayed she told me she said the 'Our Father" and the 'Hail Mary.' I did not deem it wise to interfere with her at that time, for I consider all prayers have some good in them."

"And so they have," said the priest. "And now, since you have heard of the 'Hail Mary,' I will listen to your 'mission' provided you promise me that you will say or read that little prayer every day till we meet again. Will you promise?"

The old lady was so eager to convert the affable pastor that she gave her word. She promised to say the Hail Mary every day. And then she poured out her "mission" with all the fire of a prophetess. The substance of her speech was that he was in darkness; he must come forth from that darkness by studying the Bible and preaching *it* alone. And he and his people would see the light, and leave the shadow of death for life everlasting.

The priest listened attentively, never interrupting, and courteously promised he would certainly think of what she had said and would assuredly pray for the light of the Holy Spirit in all his undertakings.

"And now," said he, "I have redeemed my promise. I have listened to you. It remains for you to fulfill yours. You will daily say that prayer, the 'Hail Mary?' "

"I certainly shall," said the good old lady, delighted that the priest seemed so favorably impressed. "I hope to call soon again."

The priest politely showed her to the door, and as she passed out of sight he said smilingly to himself: "The good God will pity your sincere, well-meant efforts, my dear lady. You are working according to your lights, and that 'Hail Mary' will take root somewhere and bear its fruits to the Church."

And he was right.

The dear old soul never called again. She passed away still dreaming of the Holy Spirit's message. She was in good faith, and so she was judged by a merciful God. She did not forget her promise to say the "Hail Mary" every day. And now behold the fruits:

After her death her eldest daughter was filled with an unconquerable yearning to know something of the Catholic Church. She found the opportunity to inquire, and her inquiries led her to be instructed and baptized. She is now a fervent convert. Her younger sister is inclining the same way, and there is little doubt that she will follow in the elder's footsteps and come out of darkness to the true path that ever leads to light.

The Unheeded Call

In one of the beds of the Sisters' Hospital lay a dying man. He had been there for some weeks and had listened attentively to the kindly urging of the priest and the earnest appeals of the Sisters to make his peace with God. He acknowledged that he knew he would not be received among God's elect without being baptized, and yet he put off the moment, saying repeatedly: "There is time enough." In vain did those who saw him failing urge him not to delay, and the chaplain, who was deeply interested in his case, ordered the good Sisters to have a table near, with everything in readiness, and call him instantly at the first sign of desire on the part of the patient. But the days wore on, and no desire manifested itself.

. . . . . .

To the big convent in the lower part of the city a poor tramp had been coming day after day for something to eat, and he always asked for some work to do in return. Good Sister G—— took quite an interest in Jimmie, and at housecleaning time engaged him to wash walls and make himself generally useful. He did this so satisfactorily that when winter came he was employed as a stoker and became a fixture in the convent. Jimmie was rather intelligent. He had been an expert cabinet maker, but he was not a "white-ribbon man," and his fondness for the "oh-be-joyful"

had caused his expulsion from one situation after another. While he stayed at the convent no sign of his failing was visible, and the Sisters hoped he would be entirely cured. There was something about the man which was not ordinary, and the Sisters, finding he was of no religion, in fact, had never been baptized, left books and papers and even a little Catechism in his room, hoping he would read them at his leisure.

He found time to do so, and ere long was seen poring over an old prayer book and learning prayers out of it. Soon he spoke to the Sisters, expressing a desire to be instructed.

"I don't know how it is, Sister," he remarked to one of the members of the community, "but when I go into your church it seems I am at home and I can pray. I never felt that way before."

"Were any members of your family Catholics?" asked the Sister.

"Not that I know," answered Jimmie. "But I'm going to be one, and I am reading up in those books on what is needed."

His sincerity was manifest.

"That's right, Jimmie," said the Sister. "Find out what is right and then follow it."

"Yes, I've made up my mind to be baptized and lead a good life."

And Jimmie got vigorously at his coal shovel as if he would show how he meant to get at religion.

Days passed. Jimmie caught cold, and as he seemed to grow worse he was sent with a note to the hospital,

in hopes that a few days' treatment and rest would bring him around. As it happened, he was placed in the bed opposite the man mentioned at the beginning of this true story.

The second night Jimmie was there his symptoms were very unfavorable, and the physicians saw that he had pneumonia. But he was cheerful, expressed confidence that he would recover and manifested great pity for "the poor dying fellow in the bed yonder." During the night he became much worse, and the night nurse said to him:

"Jimmie, you are feeling pretty bad, are you not?"

"Well, I am no better, Sister; but do you think I am dangerous?"

"I believe you are, Jimmie. I think you are seriously ill."

"Well, then, Sister, in the name of God, send down for the priest. I have never been baptized, and I don't want to die without it."

The Sister was rather reluctant to rouse the chaplain at midnight, as she thought there was no very immediate danger, but Jimmie was urgent and an orderly was sent for the priest. He came at once, thinking that he was called to the other patient, and when he looked at Jimmie seemed somewhat surprised, as he did not appear like a dying man, although without doubt most seriously ill.

"Father," said the Sister, "Jimmie has never been baptized and insists on your baptizing him now."

"Yes, Father," said Jimmie, "I want to die in the

Holy Catholic Church. I have been reading all about it."

"Are you sure, Jimmie, you want to be a sincere and true Catholic, and that you really desire baptism?"

"With all my heart, Father," said Jimmie.

"Well, then, since it is your desire I will baptize you, but to-morrow I must instruct you further."

"Yes, Father," said Jimmie, "but I believe beforehand everything you will tell me."

The chaplain signed to the Sister, who went over to the bedside of the other patient and brought the little table that was ready and waiting for *his* baptism, and he opened his eyes and languidly viewed the ceremony.

The necessary avowals were made by Jimmie, the questions answered and the sacred waters of baptism were poured on the head of the poor tramp. He lay very still with his eyes closed. Suddenly, like a flash, a change came over his face and a rattle in his throat.

"Father," said the Sister, "look! He must be dying."

The priest had also noted the change and knew what was coming. Ah! who can mistake that awful gray shadow? He hurriedly put on the stole, which he had folded up, and quickly opening his oil stock gave Jimmie Extreme Unction in the short form and then the last absolution. Before the final words had died away poor Jimmie's soul had passed in its white robe of baptismal innocence to the presence of its Judge.

"God's wonderful mercy!" murmured the priest as he quietly withdrew.

"Poor Jimmie!" said the night nurse, as she closed his eyes and drew the sheet over his white face. "God loved you and gave you the grace to respond promptly to His call. May your soul find eternal rest. Amen."

She left his bedside to call the orderlies so that the body might be removed. She was deeply impressed by the sudden call of Jimmie and the wonderful grace he had received, and an hour after, as she made her rounds and noted poor Jimmie's empty cot, her thoughts went to the poor patient in the opposite bed who had delayed so long to respond to the grace of God's call. She hoped poor Jimmie's baptism and death had made an impression on him, and she went softly to his pillow. One glance, and she started back in horror.

He was dead!

His was the unheeded call.

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